PASTOR AND PEOPLE JOINTLY FITTED TOGETHER: A CONGREGATIONAL MODEL TO REDUCE CHURCH CONFLICT WHILE CREATING VITALITY, AND HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

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The context is Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church located in Brunswick, Georgia, the county of Glynn, establish in 1895. The objective of this problem is to develop a model which embraces a healthy relationship between the pastor and people. This model was tested primarily using the qualitative and quantitative methods. The methodology used in this project includes a Data Analysis used and achieved through one workshop, four series of Bible Study, and four series of preaching sermons. Finalizing

this project, conflict management/conflict resolution is definitely a tool/skill that helped improved the outcome of the learning objective in this church.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Honor and praise is given to our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Thanks are given to my mother, Cora Stemley Wharton, and stepfather, Wayne Wharton Sr., for providing support and prayers throughout my life. Cora, in particular, has always been supportive of my ministry. The Reverend Roy Williams, my father, continues to pray for my ministry, guidance, and has shown much love and confirmation.

Special thanks to Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church for their support, prayers and the time that they participated in this project throughout the sermon series, Bible studies and workshop processes.

It is with sincere gratitude that the writer acknowledges the hard and persistent work provided by Dr. Keith Donaldson D. Lawrence and Dr. Kenneth E. Marcus. There could be no better mentors—neither knows the meaning of quit or even rest.

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Thanks to Dr. Cassandra Mency Hill, Dr. Karen Black, and Dr. Donnell Moore for serving as Professional Associates in this program. Your support and guidance, critical reading of the documents, long hours, and support will always be remembered.

I give thanks to God for the leadership team at United Theological Seminary: President Wendy Edwards, Dean of Doctoral Studies, Dr. Harold Hudson, and the entire faculty and staff for your support and prayers.

Finally, thanks to this awesome cohort focus group, both men and women, striving to achieve excellence and doing the work of God by studying to show themselves approved…. The relationships and bonds will continue long pass this journey and will always be remembered as a part of my growth in ministry.

DEDICATION

This Doctor of Ministry Project is dedicated Cora S. Wharton, my mother, the woman who has been encouraging me over the years. She always wanted the very best for me, especially in two areas: to have a relationship with the Lord and to get an education. Her investment and money spent on my education has been expressed through her love on my journey.

In addition, the project is dedicated to the late Corry Stemley, Sr., my grandfather. His spiritual guidance and support and the endless nights of praying for his family is still apparent. His love for God was always first as he trusted in the Lord and so instilled this love for God in me.

Ultimately, these pages are dedicated to all those who have encounter conflict with me because the battles and wars have allowed me to grow nearer to God through the struggle.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century there are many Christian congregations that are experiencing conflict in their churches. It is unfortunate that a place where church goers or worshippers have chosen to seek peace, love, and prayer and believe in the power of healing that there is a power struggle among church leaders because of the conflict in their congregations. According to an article in Psychology Today, conflict is disagreement, but contrary to popular belief, conflict does not necessarily involve fighting.[1] Conflict occurs from the pulpit to the pew, in both large and small congregations.

Conflict resolution training is needed in all congregations to help solve discord and prevent large-scale disputes. Conflict resolution workshops can help with individual, professional and church life. Conflict resolution and management will enhance a church to become a vital and healthy congregation. Conflict and constant disputes in and of themselves will help a church to become very unhealthy and non-vital church.

Throughout the Bible there are several scriptures where biblical characters were in conflict and had to call on their God whether it was Yahweh or Jehovah. There were also times when prophets in the Bible had to intervene and deliver a message to those in conflict. Therefore, it is no surprise at all that there are churches in today's society that are experiencing similar types of battles in their congregation. However, there are many scriptures in the Bible that deal with reconciliation, repentance and peacemaking in the

[1]Psychology Today, access February 20, 2015, https://www.psychologytoday.com /blog/ resolution -not-conflict/201211/what-makes-conflict-how-are-conflicts-resolved.

church. Needless to say, there is no perfect church but Christians should avoid debilitating conflict in the church.

All across America, from denominations to non-denominations, church leaders and church members are experiencing conflict. In many small membership churches conflict spreads throughout the entire church; where as in larger congregations conflict can remain in small groups or among certain clicks of the organization. The intention is to handle the conflict immediately before it gets out of control or someone gets hurt because of the dispute, but that does not always happen. There are times when members leave the church or the pastor, in a particular denominational setting is re-assigned because of the conflict. Conflict hinders the church and it shows in some cases a lack of spiritual growth. Basically, how can a church grow if there is always conflict and war in the congregation? Christians should have a humble heart and humble spirit and should love one another as Christ loves the Church. There should be some type of spiritual transforming power whether the conflict is between the pastor and the church leaders or church leaders and church members.

The expectation of this project is to examine conflict in a congregation and help reduce the conflict in the church so that spiritual maturity can take place. We do not portend that there will never be conflict, some challenges and struggles will arrive, but prayerfully congregations will come together spiritually to reduce conflict and deal with it as Christians thereby rowing in God. The goal is to restore relationships so that healing can take place in order to become a healthy and vital church as the congregations reduce conflict through conflict resolution tools and skills.

Chapter one of this project focuses on my upbringing, spiritual walk and how I arrived at my current professional context in ministry. This section will discuss the context analysis and demographics in the community of my ministry context.

Chapter two pinpoints and states some of the literature that will be utilized in developing the project. Under the rubric, State Of The Art in This Ministry Model, I will showcase my awareness and mastery of the issues, debates, challenges and struggles of Christian churches who are experiencing conflict in their congregation, and the pastor and people who need to work together. Conflict resolution and conflict management are highly recommended; it has helped me grow.

Chapter three discusses the theological, biblical, and historical foundations that assisted in constructing the framework that undergirds the theoretical foundational model for this project.

Chapter four discusses the methodology and the design of the model used in the field experience. In this chapter, the method by which this ministry project took place is expanded. The author shares how Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the context associates and other members of the congregation came together as a devoted team to warrant the conclusion of this project.

Chapter five reflects on the field experience that made the congregation aware of the project. It contains data collection methods and data study intentions. The facts of the results of this ministry project will be surveyed and discussed.

Finally, chapter six presents thoughts of the writer on the field experience, a summation, and conclusion. In this section, I offer recommendations to address conflict as soon as possible to congregations, officers, and church members to help reduce

conflict between pastor and people. Suggestions are offered to have conflict resolution/management training or workshops annually for church leaders.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

In discovering the synergy in both my life narrative and ministry context in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, we see where it intersects and my story unfolds. My journey begins in New Orleans, Louisiana, which is my birthplace. New Orleans is in southeast Louisiana and sits along the Mississippi River where many ships are ported. The city of New Orleans is famous for its tourist attraction Vieux *Carre'* known as the French Quarters. New Orleans is famous for its cuisine—Creole and Cajun seasoned flavor spices as well as its music. Some folk call New Orleans the birthplace of Jazz; as a matter of fact the airport is named for a famous jazz trumpet player, Louis Armstrong.

In addition to New Orleans cuisine, the place is known for two major festivals, Mardi Gras and New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. The City of New Orleans is known as the Crescent City and Big Easy. Unlike New York, which is known as the Big Apple and has a faster way of living, New Orleans, the Big Easy, has a slower pace of life. The ethnic demographics consist of African Americans, whites, Asians, Vietnamese, the America Indian and more, giving them a diverse cross-cultural heritage. However, if you ask anyone from New Orleans, they would say the roots of the heritage are the French, Creole, Cajun, African Americans, whites, and Indian people. I grew up in this lifestyle, and began to form values, likes and dislikes.

As early as, I can remember, my childhood as a young girl was full of love and joy. I was an only child who got the very best, from designer clothes, shoes, purses, and watches. I grew up celebrating my birthday every year, had parties and my family and friends celebrated these occasions with me. Parties consisted of skating, slumber, and/or dance parties. My life as a child was like a dream come true. At Christmas time I had so many gifts under the Christmas tree and all that I asked for on my wish list came true—from a fifteen inch television set to my separate phone line in my room which had a white canopy bed and furnishings. Many days I felt like Cinderella; life was like a fairy tale. At the age of nine, I attended Kelly Dancing School and participated in dance recitals. I also marched in the parade with my dancing school, which made me feel like a mature teenager although I was only nine. My parents were very proud of my grades in school and also my social skills. I also participated in talent shows and dance contests in elementary school. As early as I can remember I played recreational soccer, softball and volleyball, which helped develop leadership and social skills. I also was a Brownie and Girl Scout beginning in the third grade. Some of my elementary classmates are still some of my good friends today—Delease and Lori, to name two. Because of their closeness, we often say we were cousins. Even though I am my mother's only child, my first cousin Ramona grew up living in the same home with my parents and me until Mona was thirteen years old. Ramona is three years older than me and is the older grandchild on her maternal grandparent side. Mona was very bossy and I was very happy to see Mona leave, even though it was painful for my mother. Yes, I was quite selfish, but this may be my only childhood flaw. When Mona left, I noticed the change in the family, particularly with my parents, both loved me so much. Mona called my mother aunt and my father

uncle Roy. Even though my father has two other daughters, Cyntrell and Cheryl, I did not meet them until I was twenty-one. I had four other step-siblings, a stepsister Brendel and three stepbrothers, Wayne Jr., Kirk, and Troy whom I had known all of my life and moved in with them after my mother remarried in 1983.

In 1977, I attended St. Mary's Academy; I was maturing and growing up. I transitioned from an interracial public elementary school to an all Black girls private catholic school, where the nuns belonged to the convent named the Sisters of the Holy Family. I wore uniforms for six years: blue and white-checkered skirts to her knees and black and white oxford shoes. In 1977, when I was in the seventh grade, my parents separated and later that year I became ill and had an appendectomy. Even though I was hoping and praying, my surgery did not bring my parents back together. My father came to visit me in the hospital and I felt a difference in my life. I knew at that moment that my parents were no longer together. When I got discharged, I went home to my grandmother's home, not the home I knew on 5026 Dreux Avenue. This was different for me and I hated it. I no longer had my own room, space, and privacy. I wanted to go home and ask my mother to tell my father to leave because I wanted to come home. My parents discussed this situation and I did not have a say in the conversation because I was only a child. I noticed my fairy tale life was changing. One thing that encouraged me when I was ill was that my classmates sent cards and words of encouragement, and some even came to visit. I realized that I had a support system not only from my grandparents but also from classmates. I fell in love with the St. Mary's Academy because they promoted unity and sisterhood from the onset of me entering that school and it was reminiscent of my early life, which I loved.

I matriculated from seventh through twelve grades at St. Mary's. While attending St. Mary's I was on the drill team and student council president of my ninth grade class. Besides learning, after school was one of the good times at St. Mary's because I went to the Co-op and fellowshipped with classmates and upper class schoolmates. After school when I went to the Co-op, I purchased hamburgers, and hotdogs and my favorite brownies. The school had a jukebox, the students would put twenty-five cent in the machines and eat, dance, and fellowship for about thirty to forty-five minutes after school. The Nuns fostered an environment that not only prepared me academically and spiritually, but also socially. St. Mary's promoted leadership skills in me at an early age. While on the drill team, I marched in the parades for four years, learning to interact with people of all cultures, learning how to lead and how to follow. While marching in the parades my father was one of the chaperones; my teachers knew him well. When I was a senior in high school, I was in the debutante court and was escorted by my father in both the St. Mary's Academy and the Original Exclusive Twenty Social and Pleasure Club.

Upon completing high school, I matriculated to Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana where I received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration. At the age of twenty-four, I relocated to Washington, D.C. to pursue a career with Sprint. While living in Washington, D.C., I became a member of Ebenezer AME Church in Fort Washington, Maryland. I later relocated to Atlanta and continued to work for Sprint. I have held several positions at Sprint—Customer Service Associate, Coach, Network Operation Technician, and Business Technical Support Specialist.

In 2001, while working at Sprint, I married Mekoda Potts who is now my ex-husband. We were married for five years and are now friends. Mekoda was a preacher on staff at St. John and Michele joined St. John after they were married. A year after joining St. John AME Church in Fairburn, Georgia is where I received the call to the ministry. I discovered that there are three types of calls; a dialogical call, a direct command and an indirect call. I accepted and acknowledged the called by the Lord to serve as a minister of the gospel of Jesus the Christ. It was revealed to me that I could no longer run when my pastor, Reverend Keith Lawrence ministered to me a lesson through one of his Bible study teachings. The lesson was entitled "Knowing Your Calling." I was very emotional at the time and began to cry. I was stung by the voice of God and almost could not move, basically, I felt numb. I was amazed and shocked and did not really understand. The dialogical call and the direct command are the two types of calls that the Lord has revealed to me through my pastor, Reverend Lawrence.

First, I felt as if God was speaking directly to me. The Lord has a way of revealing certain things in time and season. I knew that I had been impregnated spiritually for months; however, I thought one had to live a perfect life or a life without any flaws. It was time for me to come forth, but I really did not know how. But, it was God's timing, and God's will and purpose for my life to spiritually deliver the birth of my call. Once I released this wonderful, astounding news to my pastor, I knew that I had given birth spiritually. My call was very similar to Jeremiah 1:5 NRSV, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." My call was a dialogical call as well as a direct command call.

Secondly, I believe that God had revealed this to my pastor before I came forth. After the lesson Pastor Lawrence taught about knowing your calling, he spoke with me and advised me to continue to seek the Lord for about two weeks in prayer and he would continue to pray for me and guide me through the process of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. One thing that I can truly say is that my ministry is sincere and holistic as it has always been. I will continue to allow the Lord to use me as God has always done. For several years, the Lord has used me to minister to people that have been wounded and hurt. God has used me when I did not know that He was using me. The Lord has allowed me to win souls and save sisters and brothers through God's only Son, Jesus Christ. I witnesses to lost souls on my job and in the community and they have accepted Jesus Christ. I truly give God the glory. Since accepting and acknowledged the call to ministry I have envisioned myself ministering to wounded women and young teenage girls in her leadership role as a minister and pastor.

Thirdly, The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) has a process and requirement for ordination listed in the Doctrine of Discipline. On December 20, 2002, I received a license to preach the Christian gospel under the leadership of Pastor Keith Donald Lawrence and by the Presiding Elder, Charlie Tatmon, Jr. at St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church in Fairburn. As I walked through this process, I enrolled in seminary and attended the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), Turner Theological Seminary constituency in the fall of 2004. Attending ITC was not an accident, even though it was a requirement of the AME Church to get ordained as an Itinerant Elder, therefore, I had to attend seminary. In addition, the doctrine and discipline of the church requires that in order to get ordained as an itinerant deacon in the

AME, one must have a Bachelor's degree from a College or University. The AME Church has an internal process of attending the Institute for five years. In 2003, I was a part of the non-ordained ministry, but licensed to preach when she entered the Board of Examiners of the AME Church.

In 2004, I transferred to New Bethel AME in Lithonia, Georgia, was ordained in May 2006 as an Itinerant Deacon, and ordained as Itinerant Elder in the AME Church on May 2008. In my second year, while in seminary, I completed one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at Emory's Crawford Long Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. Clinical Pastoral Care and Counseling became my concentration. This was the beginning of formal training to help wounded women and girls. It also provided me with valuable information toward what I felt my calling was.

In my third year in seminary, I served as Vice President of the Mission Society at the ITC. I fed the homeless and went on a mission trip to Green County, Georgia to witness and evangelize to win souls for Christ. In my senior year, I also enrolled in the Samuel Dewitt Proctor Seminary class where I traveled to my hometown to visit schools in New Orleans. While in New Orleans, I got a chance to experience and talk to victims outside her immediate family, children in schools who were affected by Hurricane Katrina. This had a tremendous effect on ministry and life, as there were more wounded than I ever could have imagined. I received a Master of Divinity degree with a concentration in Pastoral Care at the Turner Theological Seminary at Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC). After graduation, I continued my employment at Sprint and continued to serve as a pastoral care giver on the ministerial staff at New Bethel AME Church.

On June 13, 2008, I received my first pastoral appointment to the Washington Circuit, which consists of Jackson Chapel in Washington, Georgia and Black Rock AME church in Tignall, Georgia, by Bishop William P. DeVeaux. One of her major accomplishments while serving at Black Rock AME Church was the burning of the mortgage on the fellowship hall. In April 2010, I received a second pastoral charge by Bishop William P. DeVeaux to pastor New Liberty Hill AME church in Thomson, Georgia. In May 2011, I transferred from the Augusta Conference to Atlanta North Georgia Conference and she received a third pastoral charge to St. Luke AME church in Atlanta, Georgia.

While I was at St. Luke, she applied and was a recipient of the Worship Renewal Grant from the Calvin Institution sponsored by the Lilly Foundation. The project theme was "Let Us Break Bread Together." Michele was the visionary of Let Us Break Bread Together, and her prayer was to build stronger relationships with God and with persons in the church and community. The theme, Let Us Break Bread Together was birth out of the some of the members like the pastor and some dislike for the pastor, but they did not get along with each other. In July 2012, she received her fourth pastoral charge to Cobb Bethel AME Church in Atlanta, Georgia by Bishop Preston Warren Williams II.

Since, Cobb Bethel was a new pastoral charge for me, I knew that the transition was not going to be easy because I was moved in the middle of the conference year. Therefore, she kept all the officers in place and she tried to meet the people where they were, but some felt differently. Lessons learned and leadership discoveries in the last year at St. Luke and Cobb Bethel have been a challenge for me as a leader. To say the least from transformational leadership: dealing with change, embracing change, and accepting

change is some times hard for everyone to get on board. In this traditional denominational Black church, some members have been congregants for over sixty-five years. While at Cobb Bethel, I tried and build relationships with members and helped draw them closer to God. For example, in utilizing the Let Us Break Bread to Together on Our Knees; this is the theme for a grant that I was a recipient of while at St. Luke. The Calvin Institute has allowed me to continue to be the Project Director over the Worship Renewal Grant, which I am partnering with St. Paul AME Church. Dr. Grit, the manager of Calvin feels by partnering with St. Paul would enhance my leadership skills. In September and December 2012, the two churches came together and have held their first leadership conference using the theme: Let us break bread together by understanding holy communion and music in the Black church, and pastoral care. The leadership of all the officers between the two churches worked well together at St. Paul. I facilitated the workshop along with Thomas Bess. Hopefully, I will get the urgency to pastor and zeal back in my ministry, because I was running on low fuel.

Learning to work with members during urban ministry has not been very easy, as a matter of fact very different and difficult compared to members in the rural areas where she has pastored. This was a learning experience because in the rural church the members allow the pastor to take the lead, in the city taking lead can become a struggle. My leadership style has been more hands on, dictating, and authoritative, according to some. Some members have even challenged me at this church. Some of the leaders of the church have been used to being in charge for years and running everything, however as a pastor, I believes in liberation and equality in the church. I shared with some of the parishioners that I did not come to dictate, but I did not come to be dictated to; I came to

lead by example as a good leader should lead. Since I experienced conflict in each of my appointments, developing a model of ministry that would promote unity and foster appropriate relationships was critical. I will also deal with conflict management/resolution. I had a heart and a passion for pastoring God's people and constantly seeking the Lord through that I would lead the people in the right direction. Since being at Cobb Bethel, members have called the Bishop's office to report me, similar to what happened at St. Luke. When the Bishop came to visit one Sunday and spoke with me and some of the members, his response was "the church should have grown in the last thirty years, something is not right, it's not you all and it's not pastor but a spirit." Both churches that I pastored in Atlanta have gone through four to five pastors in the last five years. When the members complain, the Bishop moves the pastor to match the personality of the members. I has accomplished more in a rural setting than in the city. As a leader, I often says the serenity prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." Therefore, I reflected back on my previous experience and as a leader. My process of learning has been organizational learning for a very long time. By attending a very strictly disciplined Catholic high school that was very structured and had policies and procedures as well as rules and regulations that focused on the spirituality and the development of young girls to be leaders was very beneficial. They prayed that the girls would receive the knowledge to stay in school and this was powerful. Attending an all girls' school was great, but it was not easy to adapt to a different environment and a different culture of learning. In order to attend this school one had to agree to the dress attire. The young girl had to wear a uniform, black and white skirt and white blouse.

There were rules, regulations, policies, and procedures in every classroom, gym, and cafeteria and for special events at school. The foundation of the school was based on spiritual principles but was run like an organization where rules and regulation applied daily. If a young lady misbehaved in school, she received a demerit, which cost her twenty-five cents for every demerit—there was a price and penalty for everything. The school knew how to raise money. The church is the same way. The African Methodist Episcopal Church abides by the Doctrine and Discipline, and there are rules and regulations to guide one from the bishop to the pastor, from the pastor to the member. The culture is a major factor in the church and so is change. It is believed that since one grew up in a strict high school, workforce, environment, and church, she has adapted to this style of organizational learning. One thing about organizational learning is that everyone has to adapt to change, but can share ideas to be effective leaders. There are four areas of organizational learning: supportive leaders, intuitive knowledge processes, culture of continuous improvements, and defined learning structure.

Organizational learning has been embedded in Michele from high school to Corporate America, from Corporate America to church. In this learning process, a leader has to want to lead and learning has to be a part of the process and a way of being. A mixture of both secular and spiritual environments where knowledge has been gained, as well as on the job training, and having received a formal education in Business Administration and a Master of Divinity degree gives a unique perspective to learning. Through the secular job I was engaged in an ongoing process of learning and the same for the spiritual job in the church. As a managerial leader and spiritual leader, one must follow policy and procedure, but also instill in others to do the same or motivate and

encourage others to do the same. As an adult or a human being learning should be a lifestyle because learning is a style or way of being. Therefore, one has to be teachable in order to learn.

As a leader, a person must take the initiative and be self-directive in learning. For instance, finding ways to help develop oneself as a leader can help develop others. In the summer of 2011, I was a fellow in the Black Women and Ministerial Leadership (BWML) program at the Interdenominational Theological Center. Under the leadership of Jacqueline Grant Collier, this program is designed for women to enhance and maintain key ecclesial leadership or authoritative positions. In this program, I focused on the pastorate ministry in the context of church. BWML has empowered participants and fortunately, it was helpful during a season when I encountered challenging situations and abuse in the church. For these months, this program was empowering and uplifting with the support from other women in the group as well as the support of the Program Administrator, Itihari Toure and her Leadership Resource Consultant, Maxine Waddell. While in the program for ten months I was encouraged and motivated to persevere during the storm. Through the prayers and dialogue with a group of women from different denominations and cultures, I received support and encouragement spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically. There were times when I was discouraged, but BWML was a safe environment to discuss the challenging issues that I faced in ministry as a pastor.

As a leader, my project goal was to build stronger relationships with congregants, and inclusive church leadership through church fellowship, discipleship, and worship. The project allowed me to utilize effective leadership training seminars, church project

collaborations and after-church fellowships for the major purpose of promoting unity and fostering female leadership roles. It was through this leadership program/project that I reflected on some of the challenges and nuances in ministry; it was through this project that I learned to develop more leadership skills. I decided to apply to seminary to work on a doctoral degree, which would give further guidance and practical knowledge.

Therefore, these programs motivated me, reinforced, and affirmed my calling in ministry. I became a stronger and better leader as a Black woman in ministry. The support received from this program has been an effective way of learning and improving my leadership skills.

Some of the learning have been utilized and implemented them in the church. For example, the Leadership Resource Consultant (LRC) did powerful leadership training with the leaders at my church on accountability and responsibility. The leaders really enjoyed the training. The training empowered them to be better leaders. They felt good about themselves to get the quality of training as a small congregation. As a leader, I am highly competent in developing others in their leadership position. I can introduce new ideas and ways to develop other leaders because others have helped develop me and have been very supportive.

Finally, as the Lord takes me through this journey, sometimes I feel as though I am not worthy to be a chosen vessel of the gospel. But, I can truly say that the Lord is a faithful and just God and God will direct my path along this spiritual walk. I believe the program at United Theological Seminary will stretch me and give me a deeper understanding of what ministry can do to help congregations grow in the likeness of

Jesus. I believe that leaders must prepare themselves to deal with the complexities of this world and assist congregants to find their place in a world that is changing daily.

Although, I feel as though there are times when I am frustrated and do not know how I am going to make it, I continue to trust in God's word from Proverb 3:5 NRSV which states "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight."

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter will focus on theoretical perspectives in the Black church, from a leadership viewpoint through conflict resolution and management to healing for the church, as well as the pastor. This chapter will consist of the experience of a recent loss that was encountered and sustained from the theological and theoretical perspectives in the Black church. For example, the pastor's role, other clergy members' role, the officers' role and how the plot unfolded. In the Black church, the narrative approach is used in a pastoral care context by pastors as well as other preachers. Pastors used the narratives approach to counsel parishioners based on life experiences and biblical stories. There is a difference between storytelling in the context of pastoral care verses preaching and worship.

Pastoral Care and Counseling Perspective

In the 21st century, pastors and leaders in the Black church have ways on dealing with parishioners who are broken and needs to be made whole. In Edward P. Wimberly's book *African American Pastoral Care*, Wimberly shares the methods of effective pastoral care in the Black church. Wimberly states, "The goal of pastoral care and counseling, from a narrative perspective, is to use storytelling to strengthen people and provide interpersonal growth, so that they can respond to God's salvation drama as it unfolds and

impacts their lives."[1] The method of storytelling in the context of pastoral care is given to persons or families to utilize empathy and share a caring relationship between the pastor and the parishioners. In preaching and worship, the goals of narratives are to invite and celebrate corporately in a public contextual environment. There is always eschatological plot at the end of storytelling where God's presence is manifested to glorify God.

Wimberly highlights that story-listening is just as important as storytelling and is another element in pastoral care. Story-listening comprise a great dealing of hearing and listening with empathy of the individual or individuals engaged in struggling situations. According to Wimberly, "Empathy means that we attend to the person with our presence, body posture, and nonverbal responses."[2] As a leader in the church, one must respond verbally as the person's story unfolds. Wimberly, also state, "There are two important ways to prevent this potential abuse of storytelling. First, a growing body of literature on storytelling within the context of counseling and psychotherapy can assist pastors in knowing how to use their own life stories in facilitative ways. Secondly, pastors need to grow in their own personal life so that their life stories and participation in the faith story will be reservoir of conflict-free and anxiety-free story.

Clergy have been under attack for lack of a better word for a very long time. Clergy seem to be clueless as to how to handle conflict and challenges that are generate by doing "the work of the church." Clergy also appear to have a very poor rate of involving themselves in self-care, which is demonstrated by the fact that clergy leave the ministry at an alarming rate. There seems to be little to no denominational help for clergy

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[1]Edward P. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 18.

[2]Ibid., 19.

experiencing poor self-care, burnout, or toxic congregations who tend to kill off clergy. Many clergy are indeed wounded healers; that is, they have to help bring about healing while standing in the mist of their own wounds. The book called *Clergy Killers* focus on congregations where a very small group or numbers of church members are disruptive to the process of building the kingdom of God, so that it is virtually impossible for a pastor to maintain any kind spiritual leadership for long. Hence you have clergy killers.

Moreover, ministers in churches have experienced and endure the stress and frustration of dysfunctional relationships among congregants for months and many times for years. When this situation becomes embraceable, the clergy person is forced out of the leadership position or gives up and walks away from the death-producing situation.

In addition to the factors aforementioned, Rediger talks about the societal context in which we live and how it has contributed to clergy killers.

Entitlement thinking pervades our culture. This is a pervasion of "rugged individualism" that drove early explorers, settlers, and entrepreneurs. As a dynamic middle class emerged through opportunity, hard work and creativity, many citizens began to think of earned benefits as rights rather than as the consequences of behaviour. Hard work, responsibility, and discipline became optional. Now when entitlement expectations are not met, citizens feel cheated. They assume someone or something other than themselves to blame. When they decide who is to blame, they assume the right to punish. The church often reflects society rather than leading it; this entitlement thinking contaminates parish attitudes. It is also a breeding ground for conflict and abuse.[3]

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[3]G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 20-21.

With all of the issues of power and control, values, morals, and ethics entwined in the clergy killing process, there is an added strain in the process and that is the secrecy that occurs. Clergy killers are generally known by the congregation itself and the denomination at large, yet no effective plan for curtailing this behavior is put in place. The minister's affect is left to stand-alone. No one wants to acknowledge the relationship has failed and immediate intervention is needed. Further, no one wants to acknowledge that clergy are wounded and left for dead and the mutual love and support that the church is supposed to represent may and is not available to its membership, clergy and lay alike.

An online study published in the March issue of the Review of Religious Research found 28 percent of ministers said they had at one time been forced to leave their jobs due to personal attacks and criticism from a small faction of their congregations. The researchers from Texas Tech University and Virginia Tech University also found that clergy who had been forced out were more likely to report lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression, stress and physical health problems. And too few clergy are getting the help they need, said researcher Marcus Tanner of Texas Tech.[4]

A major concern for clergy is that their evaluations are based on their ministry or job performance at "toxic" congregations, churches with so much conflict and dissatisfaction that it is difficult for any clergy/minister to be successful or feel as if God is with them. These are very good reasons for ministers to be concerned about their future. Any time a minute percentage of the congregation can do so much damage and control the inner workings of the church and seem to be responsible for a large share of congregational conflict, this is extremely problematic and should be address systemically.

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[4]Huffington Post, "Silent Clergy Killers," accessed March 9, 2013 http://www. huffington post.com/david-briggs/silent-clergy-killers-tox_b_1437857.html.

Seven percent of congregations accounted for more than 35 percent of all the conflict reported in the National Congregations Study. And that conflict often had a high price. In the 2006-2007 National Congregations Study, 9 percent of congregations reported a conflict in the last two years that led a clergy-person or other religious leader to leave the congregation… In their study, Tanner, Anisa Zvonkovic and Charlie Adams recruited respondents through Facebook groups relating to Christian clergy. Four-fifths of the 582 ministers participating—410 males and 172 females from 39 denominations—ranged in age from twenty-six to fifty-five.[5]

According to Tanner in Briggs, it is difficult to get specific denominational figures and data.[6] Churches just do not keep good records or records at all, demonstrating when a pastor was in the process of being forced out as opposed to simply choosing to leave voluntarily because it is in the minister's own self-interest. When clergy leave and enter into a non-disclosure severance package, ministers are bound to silence and cannot disclose information regarding the clergy departure. This makes it difficult to collect data regarding clergy killing and how clergy care for themselves.

Further study reveals that, "participants were asked whether they ever left a job due to the constant negativity found in personal attacks and criticism from a small fraction of the congregation." Twenty-eight percent of the respondents said they had been forced from a ministry job. Three-quarters had been forced out once, and 4 percent had been forcibly terminated three or more times, the study found."[7]

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[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

Ministers who were forced out of their jobs because of congregational conflict were more likely to experience burnout, depression, lower self-esteem and more physical health problems, the online study found.

In addition, more than four in ten ministers forced out of their jobs reported seriously considering leaving the ministry. A separate survey by Texas Tech and Virginia Tech researchers of fifty-five ministers who were forced out of a pastoral position found a significant link with self-reported measures of post-traumatic stress disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. "This study shows that not only is forced termination an issue, but a cruel one that has very distressing effects on those who experience it," Tanner, Zvonkovic and Jeffrey Wherry reported in the current issue of the Journal of Religion and Health. "It is important that Christian organizations recognize the problem and implement steps to increase awareness and solutions."[8] Many ministers experience traumatic psychological and emotional abuse during the process of being forced out of the pulpit by these clergy killers due to congregational conflict generated by these proficient people. What makes it even worse is the complicity of silence that prevents clergy from getting the help they need to go forward.

Moreover, Rediger points out that that a pastor is forced out of the ministry every six minutes in the United States while other scholars state that approximately 1,500 clergy leave the pulpit every month. No matter the figure, both are quite alarming. Clergy killers appear to be at the heart of the crisis, and are defined as those members of the congregation and among the laity who harass and abuse spiritual leaders. Rediger's indicates that 60 percent of pastors appear to function effectively, however one fourth appear to be forced of ministry, are stressed, overworked and fall to public opinion.

[8]Ibid.

These clergy killers are "energy drainers." According to Jackie O'Neal's *What You Must Know About Clergy Killers,* confronting forces of evil in today's Church, these clergy killers appear as "an Angel of Light."[9]

At any rate, one thing in particular that seems to be overlooked is that there are various indicators of personality disorders present in some clergy killers. Some of these personality disorders include borderline personality and anti-social behavior as well as attention deficit hyperactive disorder. The role of mental health disorders and instability can play a substantial role in fuelling clergy killer behavior. Many pastors spin their wheels trying to put out fires of those who may have emotional and psychological disturbances.

The congregation can be viewed terms of a family. All families have dysfunction, and if the pastor becomes familiar with the family systems approach the congregation might benefit from some of the dynamics presented in this approach and it may lend itself to interventions used to restore a family's equilibrium. In Friedman's book *Generation to Generation,* he explains family therapy. Family therapy and the family systems approach can be generalized to intuitions and organizations like the church. In this approach, healing is focused on the relationship system rather than psychodynamics of individuals alone in the system. Friedman explains below,

> This approach deemphasizes the notion that our conflicts and anxieties are due primarily to the makeup of our personalities and suggest that our individual problems have more to do with our relational networks, the makeup of others' personalities and suggests, instead, that our individual problems have more to do with our relational networks, the makeup of others' personalities, where we stand within the relational systems, and how we function within that position. It understands the symptom bearer to be only the "identified patient and the person's problem to be symptomatic of something askew in the family itself. The theory

[9]Assist News, "Stories," accessed March 9, 2013, http://www.assistnews. net/Stories/ 2008/ s08040150.htm.

> can be extended to any relational system from a business partnership to a religious institution, where a problem in the "flock" can show up in the burnout of its "shepherd."[10]

Consequently, one way to help pastors to sustain themselves in the mist of the clergy killers is to maintain and practice clergy self-care. Pastors are merely humans with varying limitations and many pastors have exceeded the capacity of their boundaries as people to care for others while neglecting themselves. Clergy attempting to provide ministry and care to others, which goes beyond their own abilities to be productive seems to be skyrocketing. Again it is estimated that 1,800 clergy leave ministry and the pastorate a year. All of the reasons for good clergy self-care have resulted in burnout and/or dropout from ministry. Additionally, the demands of church and ministry are endless, challenging, stress producing, and are figuratively and at times literally killing clergy. Consequently, there is always one more task to be completed and a number of tasks that appear to have a need to be done better. Frequently, pastors and clergy in general burden themselves with goals that are unobtainable. It is the congregation most often that set unrealistic, unreachable expectations on the pastor.

Self-care is the key for pastors to stay healthy. The first step in self-care is to do self-assessments to evaluate your current status of health emotionally, physically, and spiritually. It is important to note at the outset that no formula for self-care fits all people. What is life draining for one person may be life giving for another.

Therefore, implications for the future would be to develop an approach through the development of a two-hour workshop that focuses on renewal and restoration for clergy suffering from clergy killers, burnout, stress, and congregational derived pain. God

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[10]Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York, NY: Guilford, 1985), 13.

still is a God of compassion and will restore those that are wounded and will heal the land. Regardless of past faults and failures, pain and suffering, God will renew God's relationship with and re-establish a new refresh spirit and zest for life and ministry. In Jeremiah 30:17 God speaks to Jerusalem and tells her, "But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds declares the Lord, because you are called an outcast." Healing is to restore health to those who are wounded. Therefore, the wound are manifested for clergy in terms of poor clergy self-care.broken and torn, through trials and tribulations, pain and suffering, God restores health tools and resources that combat the impulse to "fix" things with "band aids" and to promote healing that will lead to lifelong spiritual growth, emotional, psychological, and spiritual healing that all so helps to restore physical health for clergy.

A suggested process for development of a workshop to provide ministers with tools to combat clergy killing would be as noted below.

1. To develop a more extensive view of literature on current clergy care, pastoral care, and counseling materials to identify theory to undergird the workshop
2. The Holmes and Rahe stress test will be administered from those to participate in the workshop prior to training to establish baseline material to help guide workshop material development
3. Conduct the workshop
4. Assess and evaluate the workshop effectiveness for providing tools to combat clergy burnout
5. Write up results

CHAPTER THREE

FOUNDATIONS

Conflict resolution and management appears to be a recurring theme in this my ministry. However, the concept is not without precedence. The scriptures are replete with example after example, narrative after narrative and crisis after crisis that need the attention of YHWH. There has never been a shortage of conflicts in religious settings, even in this day and time. The evidence is prevalent. From the choir to the usher, conflict abounds; from the pulpit to the governing board to the pew, conflict breeds. Too many times the conflict is inconsequential, but more often than not the conflict is generated by the lack of spiritual growth and maturity, and a need to heal the deep-seated wounds that prevent churches/people from thriving.

It is important to define spiritual growth. In an article from the Internet we find this description:

> Spiritual growth is detailed in 2 Peter 1:3-8, His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.[1]

[1]All About God, "Spiritual Growth," accessed July 1, 2013, http://www.allaboutgod.com/spiritual-growth.htm.

The article states that eventually, without spiritual growth one will be given over to evil desires and intent. Spiritual growth is that thread, no fabric, which helps to resolve and manage conflict. The Internet article goes on to say:

> So, spiritual growth includes: (1) increasing in your knowledge and understanding of God's Word, (2) decreasing in your frequency and severity of sin, (3) increasing in your practice of Christ-like qualities, and (4) increasing in your faith and trust in God. Perhaps the best summary of spiritual growth is becoming more like Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of what it truly means to be spiritual."[2]

The task of this project is to develop a model of ministry that will provide the tools and resources to combat the impulse to fix things with band-aids and promote conflict management and resolutions that will lead to lifelong spiritual growth and healing for the congregation as well as the pastor.

In Lora-Ellen McKinney's book, *Getting to Amen: 8 Strategies for Managing Conflict in the African American Church,* she employs Goodwin Watson and David Johnson's definition of conflict, which will serve our purpose as well. McKinney summarizes their definition thusly: "Conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur; an action which is incompatible with another action, prevents, obstructs, interferes with, injures, or in some way makes that action less likely or less effective."[3]

Perhaps it is by design that the scriptures, Old and New, are filled with conflict. Perhaps it is the method by which people are to learn and develop their ministry. Perhaps it is the test that will teach God's people to rely on God alone. After all, God built a nation that was constantly in conflict, mainly because of disobedience to God. Whatever

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Lora-Ellen McKinney, *Getting to Amen: 8 Strategies for Managing Conflict in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press: 2005), 4.

the reason, it is time to confront the issue because churches are so involved with putting out fires that they neglect to provide ministries that are vital to church growth and the spiritual development of people.

The tension between pastor and congregation, or rival groups within a congregation is well known by church folk. One has only to engage members in a conversation. Some churches; however, are good at hiding the conflict from the outside world. Parker Palmer states that conflict and power plays are certain to go on in church, but intimacy is threatened by these realities, and we cover them in hopes of maintaining a façade of peace. Further, he states that our image of community forces people to hide their disagreements instead of getting them into the open where we might learn from them, where the problems might be worked through.[4] Even though it is unspoken it does not mean it is nonexistent. People tend not to deal openly with conflict. In fact, George Thompson, noted associate professor of church administration and leadership at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia states in his book, *How To Get Along With Your Church: Creating Cultural Capital For Doing Ministry,* that pastors and congregations tend not to talk about their experiences with conflict publicly. They want others to see them as successful, capable, and pleasant to work with. However, it is never that easy.[5] The reasons seem to be more inward than just mere appearance.

In the Old Testament, the roots of this internal illness are grounded in a lack of trust in a God that had promised an oath to Israel's ancestors. A God who exclaimed in Deuteronomy 8:2-6 the following:

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[4]Parker J. Palmer, T*he Company of Strangers: Christians And The Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 120.

[5]George B. Thompson, Jr. *How To Get Along With Your Church: Creating Cultural Capital For Doing Ministry* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2001), 88.

> Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the Lord your God disciplines you. Therefore keep the commandments of the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him (NRSV).

In the church of today, the internal illness can be seen in the way parishioners treat one another, and indirectly treat God. A God who as their grandmothers sang, "…brought me from a mighty long way." A God who saw them safely from dangers, seen and unseen, a God who solved hunger problems, homelessness, oppression, depression and repression; alienation, marginalization and dehumanization. The conflict their lives consisted of was eating away at them from the inside out. This does not minimize the external pains caused by hundred of years of mistreatment and abuse.

The prophets, too, are good examples of persons dealing with conflict. It is the prophets who were chosen by God to deliver pronouncement on nations gone awry—nations in conflict. The prophet was given the task of telling nations that God was not pleased with their disobedience, and punishment was impending. The prophet was called by God to deliver God's message that the people had gone too far and the consequences would be severe—not just Israel, but surrounding nations also.

> Then the Lord said to me: Out of the north disaster shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land. For now I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come and all of them shall set their thrones at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its surrounding walls and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have made offerings to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands." But you, gird up your loins; stand up

> and tell them everything I command you. Do not break down before them, or I will break you before them (Jer 1:14-17, NRSV).

When God calls the prophet, it is when the people are in conflict and their lives and world is in shambles. In the instance cited above, Jeremiah is called when Judah is being carted off to Babylon.

> Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD." Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer 1:4-10 NRSV).

The same is true of Isaiah's call. During the time of conflict and discord "in the year that King Uzziah died…" Isaiah answered the call that asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us" (Is 6:1 and 8, NRSV)? Isaiah was called when God's people were not behaving like God's chosen people. Even Amos, a contemporary of Isaiah, talks about God hating the way the people worshiped and treated one another (Am 5:21-24). Conflict is rampant in Israel and Judah to the point where God laments over a sinful Jerusalem (Is 1:21-31).

It is not without merit to note that the prophetic literature is deeply engaged in conflict. When we look at the books of the Major Prophets, in particular, there is conflict with which to deal; however, God does not leave the nation of Israel without the promise of restoration—healing. God proclaims through the prophet Jeremiah, "But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds declares the Lord, because you are called an outcast" (30:17). The very essence of God's promises to God's people is healing and restoration.

Jeremiah is not the only prophet who espouses God's healing and restoration. The experiences of all of the biblical prophets chronicle the discord that needs to be treated.

The Bible has many narratives, which tell of God being a divine healer from generation to generation throughout the Old Testament to the New Testament. God is our creator, sustainer, and redeemer, and the healer of our souls. God, who is known as Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, from Genesis through Revelation continues to heal the people. The Bible makes reference to God speaking through many prophets focusing on healing through conflict resolution that exists in the communities, homes, and churches of God's people. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus performed miracles, signs, and wonders with humankind. Jesus healed many of all kinds of illnesses. Now, the reality of the matter is that healing is needed in the local church. God's compassionate spirit can bind up and heal the wounds of the church.

Again, the prophet Jeremiah in chapter 30 verse 17 speaks to Israel and tells her, "But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds declares the Lord, because you are called an outcast." Jeremiah is basically telling Israel even though you have sinned and been disobedient, God is going to heal you. Healing is to restore health to those who are wounded. Therefore, the wound is when someone is broken and torn. Through trials and tribulations, pain and suffering, God will restore Israel's health.

This is what the prophets preached. Jeremiah in particular espoused the restoration and healing of the people. In his day, while exiled in Babylon, Jeremiah had to deal with the fact that Israel had once again been disobedient and forsook God for idolatry to the point this time of being taken into captivity by the Babylonians. Jeremiah prophesied during a time when Judah was in turmoil. Babylon invaded Judah three times.

During the second invasion in 586 BCE, the city walls were broken down, many people were killed, the king's palace was leveled, and the temple was destroyed.[6] Conflict is also common in the New Testament as can be attested to in the letters of the Apostle Paul. 1 Corinthians 1:11 states, "For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters" (NRSV). A passage that reverberates loudly is found in Philippians 4:2-4. It appears that two women in the church in Philippi are having an argument, and Paul takes this occasion to address this as he writes to this church, which is struggling.

It is indeed a conflict of epic proportion happening in Judah. Just as in our churches, conflict, whether major or minor, could be a learning and growth tool if managed appropriately. While it should matter whether the conflict is generated by malicious intent or honest significant differences, the fact still remains that the conflict must be resolved and managed. Dealing with it is what matters. In this case, as in the case with the Old Testament prophets and with Jesus in the New Testament scriptures, spiritual intervention must be summoned. What God did with Israel is needed for today's church. What God did for Israel as prophesied by Jeremiah is astonishing. God promised restoration and healing. While Judah is being punished by God by being overthrown by Babylon, God will keep God's promise to the nation that other nations called an outcast. Only God can initiate Israel's punishment, and only God can restore her and heal her.

Jeremiah, called the weeping prophet, prophesied during the period from 639 to 586 B.C. In Jeremiah served under the rule of King Zedekiah. He was a prophet chosen by God to go and send a message from God. God sent a word of hope also. At the point

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[6]Kathleen M. O'Connor, "Jeremiah Introduction," *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version With The Apocrypha.* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1051.

of our main scripture, seventy years of exile is now over and the Lord gave the prophet Jeremiah a word to free God's people. Israel's condition appeared hopeless, but God promised to reverse her misfortunes. Those who were devouring the nation would themselves be devoured by God. God would send her enemies into exile and plunder those who sought to make spoil of her. In spite of what Judah had gone through; God has not forgotten the people.

According to the Expositors Bible Commentary, the cause of the wound of Israel was intentional by God; the punishment was well deserved because of their unfaithfulness. The wounds are those she received from her enemies because of flagrant sins.[7] Jerusalem, like the church of today, has a multitude of problems, and like Jerusalem God is not pleased. The church that refuses to adhere to God's commands unfortunately, intentionally inflicts the wounds of the modern day church. Believers must learn the first and second commandment anew: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and, Love your neighbor as yourself (Lk 10:27). Christians need to imitate God in their love. The scripture states, "Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love...." (Eph 5:2 The Msg). God's Spirit and Grace is here to help the pastor and the congregation during times of conflict and trouble—learn a life of love. This is spiritual growth. It is the kind of growth that will help heal those wounds that keep people in bondage.

When people love, they are born of God (1 JN 4:7). When people love like that, they experience a relationship with God. When people love they try to walk like God,

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[7]Frank E. Graebelen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1986), 562.

talk like God, live like God. This is something worth imitating because in the words of 1 John 4:9, "This is how God showed love. God sent God's only Son into the world so people might live through God." This is the kind of love that produces spiritual growth. It is not that people, once upon a time, loved God, but that God loved God's people and sent Jesus as a sacrifice to clear away the sins of the world and the damage those sin did to the relationship with God.

Peter Steinke explains that the New Testament defines God as love. We, being in the image of God, are created for relationship. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are to sustain relationships with counterparts; otherwise we are empty;

> If I speak in the tongues of men and angels...And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge…and have not love, I am nothing (1 Cor13:1-2 RSV).

Spiritual growth is what happens when we learn to depend on God. Spiritual maturity shows a willingness to serve God by serving God's people. While in the Old Testament, God calls Jeremiah and other prophets to tell the people what they have done that is contrary to God's desires. In the New Testament Jesus has come and in Matthew 10:8, he commissions the twelve to do the work of healing: "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment." Conversely, in the Old Testament, Jeremiah is told to tell Judah that God will restore the people to health and heal their wounds. God is ready to bring the people home, and give them all that was promised. Here, it is God who is curing the sick and healing the wounds of the people. In the New Testament, the Messiah empowers his disciples to restore and heal.

When conflict arises, the spiritual growth that will release people from their bondage so that resolution can occur is at hand because God has restored and healed the people and Jesus has empowered the people to serve and not to be served.

In the discussion about conflict resolution and management, one might ignore the proverbial elephant in the room. Its importance is well understood as a woman, and the conflict that it produces. It appears that women in pastoral ministry are a cause for great conflict, but, like cheese, it gets better with time. Many reasons for the conflict are proffered. McKinney cites the following:

> The role of women in leadership is a source of conflict in part because of the theological view that the Bible prohibits women to be in authority over men. Regarding this issue, it should be noted that in recent decades the African American church as a whole has moved significantly in the direction of acceptance. That is, Scripture passages once viewed as prohibitive of women in leadership are increasingly being reinterpreted in light of the Bible's broader message of gender inclusiveness."[8]

McKinney goes on to say:

> The conflict in the church, however, goes well beyond different interpretations of Scripture. It is related, in part, to traditions that are increasingly being challenged. More specifically, church leadership is traditionally seen as being male. Men have been in positions of authority in the church, while women, as Wolk puts it, have been "responsible for promoting middle class ideals, providing funding for various programs, and running programs such as schools."[9]

Historically, if women wanted to be in the ministry, they married pastors and became the First Lady according to McKinney.[10]

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[8]Ellen McKinney, *Getting to Amen,* 60.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., 61.

Further she states:

> First ladies of the church have often seen their roles in two ways: the traditional manner in which they were subservient to their husbands and served the church by becoming responsible to one of its stereotypically female ministries, or by being the power behind the pulpit, acting in an unofficial advisory role to their husbands. Increasingly, especially in COGIC and nondenominational churches, first ladies have visible roles in partnership with their husbands, frequently as co-pastors with or without formal ordination.[11]

While the trend is changing—not fast enough and not for all women who recognize a call on their life. The conflict continues. Beth Wolk in her article, "Women and the Church—North America" concurs:

> Currently, the number of Black female clergy members and their approval rating is consistently low. Nationwide, Black females account for approximately three per cent of clergy. In fact, in most church services, the men preach while the churchgoers are composed of three times as many women as men. Overall, approval rate increased among younger and more formally-educated individuals. Approval rating also differed according to denomination. Baptist and Pentecostal individuals tended to have negative views, while Methodists were extremely positive. The fight for acceptance continues to be waged through the "womanist" philosophy. This ideology is a form of Black feminism. Just as it exists apart from the white feminist movement, so do the spheres of race, sex, and class impinge differently upon the Black woman. Unlike white women, Black women are not fighting for a place in their society. They are fighting to lead it.[12]

The conflict indeed continues. It will take spiritual growth and maturity on the part of all believers. The strategy to achieve this is one congregation at a time, one pastor at a time who is willing to stand on the promises of God, realizing as Jeremiah prophesied in 30:17: But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds declares the Lord, because you are called an outcast. Then our work can truly begin, not man work or woman

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[11]Ibid., 154.

[12]Beth Wolk, "Women and the Church: North America," Religious Traditions of the African Diaspora," accessed July 2, 2013, http://dickinsg.intrasun.tcnj.edu/diaspora/women.html.

work—but the work that pastors and congregations (too) are called in Matthew 10:8 to "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons…." We may feel that the instructions are normative in this era, but Jesus' instruction is simple: help those in need—whatever the need.

Even though not all of the commands of versus 5–16 remain normative today (most notably vv. 5–6 and 8b–10a), the fact that miraculous healings continue after Jesus' resurrection, coupled with the lack of exegetical support for views that see gifts of healings as ceasing at the end of the apostolic age, suggests that believers in all eras may expect supernatural healings from time to time.[16] Verse 8 has regularly been taken as support for modern medical missions as well; appropriate as these may be, they are not what Jesus envisions here.[13]

The fact remains that pastors and congregations must grow spiritually so that conflict might find resolution and management. God provides everything we need, and Christ empowers us.

Historical Foundation

In this section, the focus will be on Methodism in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC). Attention will be paid to the background of Methodism and the history of the AMEC, which has a history in the healing process through conflict resolution. After examining the biblical text and the history of healing, it is obvious that God has been healing for many years in the Old Testament, which extended into the New Testament under the leadership of Jesus.

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[13]Craig Blomberg, vol. 22, "Matthew," *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 171.

Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and other Blacks worshiped at Philadelphia's white St. George's Methodist Church. In time, Richard Allen would be asked to preach to the Blacks and soon the white members would attend these services to hear Allen. At some point, circa 1790 Black people were not allowed to sit in their regular pews, but were made to stand around the wall. One Sunday they were asked to go to the segregated balcony. Allen stated that they were coming in late and did not understand where they were asked to sit, so they sat in their usual seats on the main floor. Prayer was called and the Black parishioners knelt, but soon they were being asked to get up and go to the balcony. The trustee was pulling Absalom Jones off his knees and Jones asks him to wait until prayer ended. There was considerable scuffling, by this time prayer was over, and the Blacks got up and walked out en masse. Allen decided that Blacks would not be treated equally unless they formed their own congregation. In the words of Allen, whites "were no more plagued with us in [their] church."[14] According to Gonzalez in *The Story of Christianity*, volume 2, "Allen organized in Philadelphia a local church for Blacks, but repeated conflicts with the white hierarchy of his denomination eventually led to its separation from the white church and the birth of a new denomination."[15]

The AMEC grew out of the Free African Society (FAS), which Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others established in Philadelphia in 1787. The Preamble of the FAS explains its purpose:

> Whereas, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, two men of the African race, who, for their religious life and conversation have obtained a good report among men,

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[14]Albert L. Winesman, Growing An Engaged Church*: How To Stop Doing Church And Start Being The Church Again* (New York, NY: Gallup Press, 2006).

[15]Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story Of Christianity: The Reformation to The Present Day* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1985), 253.

> these persons, from a love to the people of their complexion whom they beheld with sorrow, because of their irreligious and uncivilized state, often communed together upon this painful and important subject in order to form some kind of religious society, but there being too few to be found under the like concern, and those who were, differed in their religious sentiments; with these circumstances they labored for some time, till it was proposed, after a serious communication of sentiments, that a society should be formed, without regard to religious tenets, provided, the persons lived an orderly and sober life, in order to support one another in sickness, and for the benefit of their widows and fatherless children."[16]

Among the first organizations of its kind in America, the Free African Society's main goal was to provide aid to newly freed Blacks so that they could gather strength and develop leaders in the community. The society soon became too large to meet in Richard Allen's house and its meetings moved to the Quaker African School House. In 1789, the society more closely aligned itself with the Quaker faith and its meetings began to mimick Quaker services. That prompted Allen, who was a Methodist, and many who were loyal to him to leave the organization.[17] Richard Allen was adamant about the Methodist orthodoxy. He maintained the idea that Methodism was best for his people. Richard Allen had grown up Methodist and having been a slave it seemed natural that one of the most important principles was that all of God's children are equal.

According to Dennis C. Dickerson, retired historiographer and Executive Director of Research and Scholarship for the African Methodist Episcopal Church, when officials at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church pulled Blacks off their knees while praying, FAS members discovered just how far American Methodists would go to enforce racial

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[16]Preamble of the Free African Society, July 4, 2013, http://www.pbs.org /wgbh/aia /part3 /3h465t.html.

[17]Historical Society of Pensylvania, access July 4, 2013, http://hsp.org/history-online/exhibits /richard -allen-apostle-of-freedom/the-free-african-society.

discrimination against African Americans. Hence, these members of St. George's made plans to transform their mutual aid society into an African congregation.[18]

Although most wanted to affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church, Allen led a small group who resolved to remain Methodists. In 1794 Bethel AME was dedicated with Allen as pastor. To establish Bethel's independence, Allen, a former Delaware slave, successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution. Because Black Methodists in other middle Atlantic communities encountered racism and desired religious autonomy, Allen called them to meet in Philadelphia to form a new Wesleyan denomination, the AMEC.[19]

The AMEC began to grow in other parts of the country but most particularly in the Northeast and the Midwest. Blacks became increasingly aware of their treatment at the hands of their white Christian brothers. They were proving to be hypocritical in their actions even though their voice was preaching love.

The geographical spread of the AMEC prior to the Civil War was mainly restricted to the Northeast and Midwest. Major congregations were established in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, and other large Blacksmith's Shop cities. Numerous northern communities also gained a substantial AME presence. Remarkably, the slave states of Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, Louisiana, and, for a few years, South Carolina, became additional locations for AME congregations.[20]

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[18]The History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, accessed July 2013, http://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid.

The denomination reached the Pacific Coast in the early 1850's with churches in Stockton, Sacramento, San Francisco, and other places in California. Moreover, Bishop Morris Brown established the Canada Annual Conference.[21] The most significant era of denominational development occurred during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Oftentimes, with the permission of Union army officials, AME clergy moved into the states of the collapsing Confederacy to pull newly freed slaves into their denomination. "I Seek My Brethren," the title of an often repeated sermon that Theophilus G. Steward preached in South Carolina, became a clarion call to evangelize fellow Blacks in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Texas, and many other parts of the south. Hence, in 1880 AME membership reached 400,000 because of its rapid spread below the Mason-Dixon Line. When Bishop Henry M. Turner pushed African Methodism across the Atlantic into Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1891 and into South Africa in 1896, the AMEC now laid claim to adherents on two continents.[22]

While the AMEC is doctrinally Methodist, clergy, scholars, and laypersons have written important works, which demonstrate the distinctive theology and praxis, which have defined this Wesleyan body. Bishop Benjamin W. Arnett, in an address to the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, reminded the audience of the presence of Blacks in the formation of Christianity. Bishop Benjamin T. Tanner wrote in 1895 in *The Color of Solomon*—What? Those biblical scholars wrongly portrayed the son of David as a white man. In the post-civil rights era theologians James H. Cone, Cecil W. Cone, and Jacqueline Grant, who came out of the AMEC tradition, critiqued Euro-centric

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[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

Christianity, and African American churches for their shortcomings in fully impacting the plight of those oppressed by racism, sexism, and economic disadvantage.[23]

It is no doubt that Allen's theology was liberation theology. Allen believed in equality of all people, but definitely the church should not indulge in discrimination. Allen made no attempts to give the white Methodist a pass. After walking out of St. George's, there were many disputes and conflict with this Black congregation. However, he remained adamant about remaining Methodist, feeling that because many of his people were still slaves and not reading or writing this method was easier to understand.

John Wesley and his brother Charles were raised in the theological tradition of the Church of England. John Wesley's mother told him that God had plans for him because he had been saved miraculously from a fire in the parsonage as a lad. When he grew up, at Oxford he had distinguished himself as a scholar and as a devout young man. Wesley joined a religious society founded by his brother Charles and a group of friends, Gonzalez stated and he further stated that its members made a covenant that included the following:

- To lead a holy and sober life
- To take communion at least once a week
- To be faithful in their private devotion
- To visit the prisons regularly
- To spend three hours together every afternoon
- To study the Bible and books of devotion[24]

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Gonzalez, *The Story Of Christianity,* 211.

John Wesley was the only ordained priest in the group, and he had exceptional gifts so he became the leader of the group. Other students mocked them as a holy club and Methodists.[25]

In 1735, Governor James Oglethorpe of Georgia invited Wesley to pastor in Savannah. He accepted, hoping to preach to the Indians. Everything was going fine on the journey. There were Moravians aboard the ship and Wesley learned enough German to communicate with them. A storm came up and the ship was in trouble because the mainmast split. Wesley was afraid, and the crew would have panic, but for the unbelievable calm of the Moravians, who sang throughout the ordeal, as noted by Gonzalez.[26] Gonzalez continues: "Meanwhile, Wesley, who was chaplain of the vessel, came to the bitter realization that he was more concerned about himself than about his fellow travelers. After the storm, the Moravians told him that they could behave so bravely because they did not fear death; and the young man began doubting the depth of his own faith."[27]

Wesley tried to make his parishioners in Georgia like the holy club. The religious society was growing. Heitzenrater states that the parish in Savannah was none for the worse for Wesley's ministry. The attendance at public worship had grown steadily since his coming.[28] John Wesley combined the religious zeal of the Moravians with the social activism that had long characterized the Reformed Tradition. When Jesus commissions

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[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., 209.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Richard C. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 68.

his disciples to heal the sick, raise the dead. Wesley understood Jesus' directive and as a representative of God was able to attend to those who need help.

Back in England, according to Gonzalez, not knowing what to do, he contacted the Moravians. One of them, Peter Boehler, became his religious advisor. When Wesley came to the conclusion that lacked saving faith, and that therefore he should cease preaching, Boehler advised him to continue preaching faith until he had it, and once he had it, to continue preaching because he had it. Finally, on May 24, 1738, Wesley had the experience that changed his life.

> In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change, which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even *mine,* and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.[29]

The conflict and struggles evident in the founding of Methodism only go to show how conflict enters every facet of religion and church life. From the highest level to the bottom, "Christian healing refers to cures accomplished in the name of Christ and through the agency of his Spirit and saints."[30] While this is specifically discussing healing of the body, the same entities are present in conflict management and resolution—Christ and the Spirit. If conflict is to be resolved and managed spiritual growth is required. Wesley and Whitfield had conflict but through their prayer life, Bible study and private devotions among other spiritual practices they were able to part as friends and go on to do great things individually.

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[29]Gonzalez, *The Story Of Christianity,* 212.

[30]Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2005) 4.

The same can be said of Richard Allen of the AMEC. When he and the others walked out of St. George's Church their response to maltreatment was to worship God under their own fig and vine tree. Through spiritual growth and maturity the AMEC was born. However, some conflicts have long-lasting affects. One Jarena Lee comes to mind. Richard S. Newman begins by stating that Black women began challenging notions of patriarchy. And Allen was on the front line of this development as well. A free Black woman (Jarena Lee) from New Jersey who, after an initial dispute with Allen over Black female preaching in Bethel Church, compelled the Bishop to expand African American women's roles beyond the Black republican mother and helpmate.[31]

Lee decided that the AMEC was for her after she heard Allen preach in 1804. She could not find her spiritual bearings until then. She had been widowed and now was a single mother. But a sermon from Allen drew her in. When Lee told Allen she had been called to preach, Allen told her, "Our discipline knew little of women preachers."[32] Lee preached around Philadelphia on her own. She returned to Bethel and when one of the preachers could not finish his sermon, Lee took over. Allen was impressed and became an active supporter of Lee's preaching, but he did not support ordaining women.

With Allen's sanction, Lee traveled to a host of other locales as an official representative of the AME Church. If the males were antagonized by her mere presence, the women were emboldened. Newman reports Bethel's founding in the 1790's was predicated on wives following husbands out of St. George's Church. Then Lee came along and, for the first time, publicly spoke to the challenges facing pious women of

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[31]Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2008), 231.

[32]Ibid.

color. "I send by whom I will, for all one in Christ Jesus," she later wrote, referring to Paul's famous Epistle (Gal 3:28). By bringing Black women into the fold, Lee encouraged families to join and strengthen the AME Church.[33]

The apparent conflicts give God the opportunity to heal wounds and restore congregations to health. While some are outcast as Wesley, Allen, and Lee, God cares for them all. Most times the conflict needs the help of the Holy Spirit, which assists people in growing spiritually.

Healing in the Bible by Christ was considered a sign of Christ being the Messiah. Many believed in Christ because of these signs and wonders, but Christ said those who believed without seeing signs are blessed. Porterfield states that Christianity is not the only religion in the world concerned with healing and its connotations. She continues by stating that healing is part of many, if not all, religions and goes a long way in explaining why tendencies to be religious, and capacities for religious feelings and ideation, seem to have evolved as instinctive parts of human nature.[34]

There are problems with healing miracles, however. According to Porterfield from the beginning, people had difficulty believing in the exorcisms and healings, from other miraculous acts ascribed to Jesus, and even more difficulty understanding what these events meant.[35] This presents a problem because people defined miracles as they wanted and the understanding of miracles did not readily say what belief in them meant.

Porterfield states that Harold Remus maintains that Jesus was a wounded healer whose gift in healing others derived from his own experience of being wounded. Further

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[33]Ibid., 231-232.

[34]Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity,* 8.

[35]Ibid., 22.

she states that interpreting this concept in terms of Christian theology, Remus argued that the coincidence of healing power and powerlessness on the cross manifest in Jesus should be a model for all ministers of the gospel.[36]

Pastors are considered wounded healers using Henri Nouwen's definition. As Nouwen tells the old legend from the Talmud, we learn about healing:

> The Messiah, the story tells us is sitting among the poor, binding his wounds one at a time, waiting for the moment when he will be needed. So it is too with the minister. Since it is his task to make visible the first vestiges of liberation for others, he must bind his own wounds carefully in anticipation of the moment when he will be needed. He is called to be the wounded healer, the one who must look after his own wounds but at the same time be prepared to heal the wounds of others.[37]

This young church, the AMEC, is a church of liberation. It is grounded in the Wesleyan tradition of Methodism. It cannot deny its birth or its growth in liberation; yet it is slow to accept women and in some cases women are outcasts. It pretty much does to women as what the white Methodist did to the Black people. However, when one reads the mission, vision, purposes, and objectives, of this church, one is encouraged; but there is also hope that things will change to resemble what the mission, vision, purpose, and objectives are. People continue to hope that this mission statement will live in the lives of people and not just reside on paper. When Nouwen talks of making visible the first vestiges of liberation for others, pastors and congregation leaders are called upon to heal, as Jesus commissioned his disciples and others to do. Liberation is healing, and so the purpose of the AMEC, which states, in part, to spread the liberating gospel of Christ

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[36]Ibid., 29.

[37]Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 82.

would constitute a healing. The Mission, vision, purposes, and objectives of the AMEC follow:

Our Mission

The Mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical, developmental, of all people.

The Vision

At every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall engage in carrying out the Spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the AME Church evolved that is, to seek out and save the lost, and to serve the needy. It is also the duty of Church to continue to encourage all members to become involved in all aspects of church training.

The Purposes

1) Make available God's biblical principles

2) Spread Christ's liberating gospel

3) Provide continuing programs, which will enhance the entire social development of all people.

The Objective

In order to meet the needs of every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall implement strategies to train all members in: (1) Christian discipleship, (2) Christian leadership, (3) current teaching methods and materials, (4) the history and significance of the AME Church, (5) God's biblical principles, and (6) social development to which all should be applied to daily living.[38]

Today, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has membership in twenty Episcopal Districts in thirty-nine countries on five continents. Twenty-one active Bishops, and nine General Officers who manage the departments of the church

[38]*The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2008* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2009), 16.

administer the work of the Church.[39] This church is preparing to celebrate the 200th anniversary as a denomination in 2016. The Senior Bishop of the AMEC, The Rt. Reverend John R. Bryant states in his message online the following:

> The African Methodist Episcopal Church has a unique and glorious history. It was unique in that it is the first major religious denomination in the Western World that had its origin over sociological and theological beliefs and differences. It rejected the negative theological interpretations, which rendered persons of African descent second-class citizens. Theirs was a theological declaration that God is God all the time and for every body. The church was born in protest against slavery—against dehumanization of African people, brought to the American continent as labor.[40]

Again, there is a theme of rejection and outcast here in the founding of the AMEC. The story continues to be told. It is a story of liberation, restoration, and healing. It is a story of a people who were being called outcast and rejected by others who were just like them. It is a story of a people who knew that their God was the God of all people and while things may not be what they would like, their God had brought them from a mighty long way. Even today, the ancestors of Richard and Sarah Allen tell the story to their children and grandchildren because it is a story worth telling. It is worth telling because we need to be reminded that we are called to restore, heal, and liberate. We, like the disciples are called to cure the sick, raise the dead... (Mt 10:8).

Theological Foundations

Generally, those persons who controlled the purse strings controlled everything else. America's power is in the 1% of the wealthy people and the rest of us are powerless, by this way of thinking. Then it dawned on me that this could not be true. If true, then

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[39]The African Methodist Episcopal Church, accessed July 2013, http://www.ame-church.com.

[40]Ibid.

Christ was powerless and his declaration that "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth" (Mt 28:18) is untrue. Paul's assertion in Ephesians 1:20-23 which states the following is also untrue:

> God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Power, particularly for those who do not have power is a negative term. All they see is someone telling them what they can and cannot do; what they can have and cannot have and so on. But as an African American, and yet a woman, there has to be hope. James Cone provides a basis of hope in his book *Black Theology and Black Power*. While Black power as a movement is a product of the more militant Civil Rights era, Cone uses it as a tool for understanding that God's intention for all of God's creation is to be empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit which sets the oppressed free. Black power acts as a salvific agent in this liberation. When James Cone talks of power, he does so by talking about Black power and defines Black power as complete emancipation of Black people from white oppression by whatever means Black people deem necessary.[41]

The key here is the term oppressed—the powerless. The question this concept raises makes the writer shudder. How can one with so much deny another a fair wage so that they can take care of their family? How can a Christian with all of the power seek to keep others down? How can we claim to be Christian and not fight for the liberation of the oppressed/powerless? How can we proclaim the message of Christ and leave out the most significant part—liberation? We must liberate people from the social, political, and

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[41]James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1997), 6.

economic ills of this society. Cone puts it this way, "Anyone who claims to be fighting against the problem of oppression and does not analyze the exploitive role of capitalism is either naïve or an agent of the enemies of freedom."[42]

Power is not always negative and the use of Black power has its merits when it is used to liberate those who are powerless. It has transforming qualities. This is where the positive agent in Black power informs Black theology. Black theology as espoused by Cone leaves no doubt that God is on the side of the oppressed. He says that there is a desperate need for a Black theology, a theology whose sole purpose is to apply the freeing power of the gospel to Black people under white oppression.[43] In other words, freeing power is Black power because in Cone's experience, it is Black people who lack power and need to be liberated. This, then, contrary to the beliefs of many theologians, is the power that transforms and therefore, Black power is a positive agent.

In *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians*, Sheilah M. Jones states, "The basic theological sources for womanists are Christian scripture and the lived experience of African American women."[44]

Robert Linthicum discusses "A Religion of Domination" in his book *Transforming Power: Biblical Strategies for Making a Difference in Your Community.* He asks, "Why would religious leaders refuse to give people the information they need in order to be in a right relationship with God?"[45] This is a wonderful question since

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[42]James H. Cone, A *Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), xvii.

[43]_____, *Black Theology and Black Powe.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 31.

[44]Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 513.

[45]Robert C. Linthicum, *Transforming Power: Biblical Strategies for Making a Difference in Your Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 43.

keeping people ignorant keeps the powerful in control. Further Linthicum says, "The withholding of vital information places control in the hands of the priests. If I do not give you the information you need and you become increasingly desperate for that information, I am able to control you as long as I withhold that information. And if I am able to control you over a long period, I can begin to dominate you in every way."[46]

Jones says that Grant and Williams agree that a theory of liberation cannot simply do away with Christianity, despite its role in justifying the oppression of women. It is obvious, even in the writer's experience, that Christ's gospel and Christian traditions are central beliefs.[47] Salvation and Christ's Word of righteousness to the poor and the helpless remain paramount in African American women's values and religious fervor. However, male-oriented, scriptural abuse still remains a concern. God's activity in the Old Testament cannot be ignored; neither can the misuse of the Bible in the oppression of women (a powerless group). Jones maintains the following:

> Like Black liberation theologians, womanist theologians emphasize knowing God as revealed in the Old Testament. Williams and Grant agree that there is a "liberating word" in the Bible, although at the same time they believe that the use of the Bible must be carefully constructed, since, in addition to serving liberation, the Bible has historically served as a tool of oppression against women and ethnic and sexual minorities. Womanist and Christian feminist concur that the Bible is a male story, written by males, about males, and for the edification and advancement of males.[48]

Apparently James Cone heard the questions (which are also for liberation theology in the Third World) and responds modestly in the preface of the reprint of his second book, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 20th ed. Cone states that he has become so

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[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 515.

embarrassed by not being receptive to the problem of sexism in the Black community and society as a whole. Only what he did was use inclusive language. He admits that this is not enough to rectify things, because sexism cannot be eliminated (anymore than can racism) simply by changing words.[49]

The abuse of power leads to conflict. Lyon and Moseley identify several types of conflict. Intrapsychic conflict, involves feeling, or thinking toward the same person or idea. Then there is interpersonal conflict where one can be at odds with a spouse, a friend, a colleague, or a fellow member of the church. There is intragroup conflict wherein tension is experienced among subgroups in the group to which we belong. Conflict between groups is characterized as intergroup, i.e. different congregations, families, or companies competing or disagreeing about something.[50]

Congregational conflict involves several of these forms of conflict according to Lyons and Moseley, and they usually occur at once.[51] This makes for a difficult situation as people have different capacities to deal with conflict, and so we respond to conflict in different ways. Leadership in these instances is all-important; however, if the leadership is conflicted matters may be in turmoil for quite some time. How can the church find Jesus in conflict? This is where leaders must examine themselves in light of their call and response. They must look at their relationship with God and the congregants. Our relationship with God through Jesus the Christ is more than "Thou shalt not…" It is a

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[49]Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, xv-xvi.

[50]K. Brynolf Lyon and Dan Moseley, *How to Lead in Church Conflict: Healing Ungrieved Loss* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 9.

[51]Ibid.

personal bond that should link us to our sisters and brothers. We, then, will not be without conflict, but we will know how to settle the disagreement.

God's relationship through Christ with God's people is revealed in the Triune God as expounded by Karl Barth. Barth holds that the Trinity is at the forefront of God's revelation: the Father is Lord of our existence (Creator), the Son is Lord in our enmity towards him and as he sets us free (Reconciler), and the Holy Spirit sets us free to respond to our God.[52] When this relationship is realized, then the relationship with the congregation should be possible. Even though there may be conflict, the Son is the reconciler—the one who ends conflict. It becomes the pastor's duty to help the congregation understand and internalize Christ's humanity and the relationship God desires with God's people. If this is to be our objective, we must help the congregation grieve the losses that underlie the conflict, according to Lyon and Moseley.

> Their hypothesis is "…leading congregations in intense conflict is, in its deepest dimensions, about helping congregations grieve loss. By learning to more *fully* engage the losses evoked in conflict and to be present to them in ways that open us to their deeper, more ambiguous meanings, congregations will have greater opportunity to discover the transforming power of conflict."[53]

They contend that conflict is about incompatibility and interference, and fundamentally it is about what we do with loss. Further they say that conflict raises issues, and thus emotions, of loss that is believed to already have happened, loss that is felt to be in the happening, and loss that is imagined, threatened, or anticipated to happen in the future.[54] Therefore, conflict is about change and finding out what has been loss and grieving that loss so that healing can take place. So Barth's Trinity, which reveals the Son

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[52]David E. Ford and Rachel Muers, eds., "The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918," 3rd ed., *The Great Theologians* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 30-31.

[53]Lyon and Moseley, *How to Lead in Church Conflict,* 2-3.

[54]Ibid., 10-11.

as reconciler is ever present in humankind's relationships, which are conflicted at times and in need of healing.

God, in conflict with humankind because of their sinful nature, experienced loss in giving his only Son to suffer death on a cross for sin that was not his. Jesus was in constant conflict with the Pharisees, whose disagreements were petty; for instance, paying taxes to Caesar or to God, doing good works on the Sabbath, talking with sinners. Jesus was more interested in showing compassion rather than being holy. No loss has ever been this great and the change that it produced is inexpressible.

In a similar case study recorded in the book, *Getting to Amen* by Lora Ellen McKinney, the pastor knew that at some point he must take a stand. He decided that the people he would reach were worth the loss of the defiant teacher. The pastor concluded that God's grace is sovereign, not our conflicts.[55] The conflict was important, but not sovereign. The pastor surmised that God's will was greater than the conflict. He said that he had no regrets in asserting his authority, and a greater ministry resulted from his decision.[56]

McKinney says that conflict is part of human nature, having existed since Adam and Eve had their argument about whether or not God gave them permission to eat that appealing piece of fruit in the Garden of Eden. She says that more often than not, throughout history, human conflict has arisen from needs related to territoriality.[57] One way we try to manage conflict is to look for a biblical passage or a fundamental claim of

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[55]Lora-Ellen McKinney, *Getting to Amen: 8 Strategies for Managing Conflict in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005), 127-28.

[56]Ibid., 128.

[57]Ibid., 3.

the faith. Or we look for a way to pray together or for a conflict meditation strategy that might solve the dilemma in which they find themselves.[58]

Conflict management is not easy. It takes lot of reading and educating the mind so that skills and knowledge is available to the leader. The leader further needs a good spiritual fiber. It is very important to have a good prayer life and time for meditation and scripture study. As Christians we are not alone. The Garden of Gethsemane is a reminder of what we need to be about. Jesus prayed and so should we. If we are going to beat this abuse of power, prayer is the answer.

McKinney tells us that it is idolatrous to behave as if we have all power because that is God's domain. She says that parishioners often have a certain amount of fear of their pastors and some pastors tend to exploit that. This is an unhealthy use of power.[59] McKinney states that compassion is a strategy for dealing with conflict management. She says that we need to find what is human in us, understanding what we share, and, regardless of what may be different, learning to love it.[60] McKinney says that excellent church management leads by example. If the pastor sets a conflict-free or conflict-neutral example and a well-organized model, the church is more likely to follow his or her lead.[61] It would be a good thing if conflict management would begin from the top and move down, because, again, we need to lead by example.

Sheilah M. Jones states the following:

> The final message of womanist theologians, as for all liberation and liberating theologies, is that because God is just and good there is hope for improving

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[58]Ibid., 97.

[59]Ibid., 53.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid., 54.

> humanity. God does not intervene directly in human situations to rectify evil structures, but through Jesus' ministry God has revealed a model for just relations and offers the grace that enables group to struggle for liberation. Womanists demonstrate that African American women can trust in the authority of their experience of God in devising a genuine foundation for self-liberation from race, class, and gender oppression."[62]

This writer agrees with Jones, but adds that the abuse of power is also oppressive and those who need deliverance from this must internalize the message of liberation theology so that we can all be free and empowered.

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[62]Musser and Price, *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians,* 518.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Conflict in the church has been around since the Garden of Eden. From the very beginning, God's creation has been in conflict with God's created order. Transforming conflict into a positive rather than a negative force is a spiritual pursuit and needs to be grounded in biblical principles: love of God, neighbor, and self. When members of the church are able to become the body of Christ and seek the oneness that God envisions, we will be able to emerge as a greater visible presence of God's kingdom on earth.

This doctor of ministry project has looked at the systemic problem of conflict and how it has been revealed and dealt with biblically and historically. We have identified how theologians have expressed conflict as a part of the sin of humanity that has become a regular part of the human condition informing our behavior. Conflict when not managed properly and effectively has reduced the effectiveness of God's witness on earth and in some instances destroyed people, families, pastors, and churches. This Doctor of Ministry project "Pastor And People Jointly Fitted Together: A Congregational Model To Reduce Church Conflict While Creating Vitality, And Health," attempts to create a replicable model of ministry to strengthen congregational relationships between pastor and people and also with members within the life of a congregation.

In order for this to be a replicable model of ministry, it is necessary to create a process whereby any congregation can take what is being offered and tailor it to their

specific congregational needs. The add-value and benefits of this model are the emergence of a spiritually mature congregation that allows the Word of God and spiritual formation to lead and guide the church in all endeavors avoiding unnecessary and unhealthy conflict.

The mixed method and data triangulation will be use to assess the results of this work. It is recommended that in order for the fidelity of this work to emerge, the identification of a known church conflict be used. Those who have participated in the conflict and those who are seeking to learn for the experience are the most viable candidates for this purpose. The desire for healing, understanding, and renewed fellowship among the saints is the ultimate goal while providing a working model for future challenges in the church.

This project is not designed to be a cure-all by its implementation, rather, this project is designed for critical self-reflection, spiritual maturity, authentic relationship building and moving a congregation to becoming the body of Christ as identified in 1 Corinthians 12. Ideally, this project should be used for every incident in the life of the church were relationship have been strained and where pastor and people have created an unhealthy gulf that need to be restored. By demonstrating the successful biblical precepts that undergird this process, a shift in the ethos and behavior of a congregation should occur over time.

The project will be divided into four separate areas; prophetic preaching, biblical teaching, a workshop on church conflict, and a conflict survey. Each area to be tested will have an instrument for extrapolating data to be used for analysis and strengthening the process from its initial methodology.

The hypothesis for this project is that if biblically based processes of conflict resolution are implemented when conflict arise in the church, a reduction of unhealthy conflict will emerge creating a vital and healthy congregation.

The project will be tested over a four-week period. It is understood that an actual church conflict may take several weeks or months to resolve. However, for our purposes, this model will demonstrate the steps necessary to bring unhealthy conflict to a successful end allowing reconciliation and restoration to occur in the life of those affected.

Prophetic Sermon Series

The prophetic sermon series is designed to allow the congregation to hear the Word of God concerning issues of biblical conflict. It will demonstrate how God uses willing servants to identify and solve conflict in order for God's perfect will and favor to abide with God's people. Each sermon chosen in this series will allow hearers to find themselves and/or the church in the biblical narrative. The hearers will be able to identify God's desire for God people compelling them to do self-reflection and assess how they contributed to the conflict and how they can take action to eradicate the conflict and bring restoration and reconciliation.

- Jeremiah 30: 15-19 Healing and Restoration for the Wounded and Broken
- Isaiah 6:1-8 Here Am I, Send Me
- 1 Corinthians 1:10-25 An Appeal from The Lord
- Philippians 4:1-10 Rejoicing in Times of Trouble

Questions for Consideration and Reflection

1. What is God's response to conflict according to the text?
2. What is the responsibility of God's messenger when conflict comes?
3. Who Does God hold accountable for conflict among his chose people?
4. What is the basis of conflict in the text?
5. How does the conflict in the text resemble our church?

Biblical Teaching

The biblical teach segment of the project is designed to allow the participants to approach the text from both an exegetical and hermeneutic perspective. In this wise, both the original intent and biblical interpretation gleaned from the study can be analyzed and applied to current life applicable situations, specifically the conflict that exist in the congregation. Each lesson will give the participant opportunity for input, especially in understanding how the text applies to their lives and the conflict that exist in the text. They will also be required to articulate a prescription and remedy for peaceful resolution and restoration.

- Matthew 18:15-35
- James 4:6-12
- James 1:19-27
- Romans 12:14-21

Questions for Consideration and Reflection

1. What are the circumstances that led to the directives of the Lord in the text?
2. What is the reason for having the issues (conflict) fully disclosed in the text?

3. What is the meaning of the text for its time? For today?
4. Where in the life of the church has this situation revealed itself?

Understanding Conflict Workshop

The understanding conflict workshop is designed to provide instruction and direct interaction with participants regarding issues of healthy and unhealthy conflict. From the information disseminated, participants will be asked to discuss issues of conflict that have occurred in the life of the church. Participants will work to reconstruct the issues surrounding the conflict and then propose ways in which the conflict can be resolved or could have been avoided. This session should prepare the participant to recognize signs of unhealthy conflict and move to resolution prior to unhealthy actions and activities negatively affect the momentum and moral of the congregation.

Understanding Conflict Workshop Outline

Introductions

Purpose of Workshop

Definition of Terms

- Control
- Conflict
- Leadership
- Love

Churches Have Become Battlefields

- What Went Wrong
- Why Does It Continue

Conflict

- Conflict as a Way of Life
- 85/15 Rule
- Theories of Conflict
- 7 Types of Conflict
- Constructive Conflict
- Destructive Conflict
- Calming The Waters

Love = Healthy Congregations

- Governing and Guiding Values
- Fighting In the Church
- Forgiveness

Understanding Conflict Survey

Through this survey, participants will be able to assess and demonstrate their knowledge of conflict, team-building and appropriate ways of finding common ground when making decision and seeking to resolve issues that arise in the church.

Understanding Conflict Survey

1. What do we fight about?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Who knew about the conflict?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. How did you feel about the conflict? Circle all that apply.

Angry

Defensive

Overwhelmed

Shocked

Confident

Compassionate

Sympathetic

Peaceful

Apathetic

4. What were the positive outcomes of the conflict?

I'm wiser

Purifying process

Better defined vision

Better communication with congregation

Stronger relationships

Reconciliation

Growth in attendance

5. What were the negative outcomes of the conflict?

Damaged relationships

Sadness

Decline in attendance

Leaders left the church

Loss of trust

Bitterness

Loss of communication with congregation

6. When conflicts arise, I usually stand on my principles.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

7. When a conflict arises, I am usually willing to adjust my priorities to reach a resolution.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

8. When a conflict occurs, I tend to back out of the situation and do something else.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

9. I don't like to rock the boat, so I cooperate with others and accept instructions easily.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

10. During conflict, I immediately work to get everyone's concerns out in the open.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

11. I think it is more important to get along than to win an argument.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

12. Once I have taken a position, I don't like to have others try to talk me out of it.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

13. When there is a conflict, I make a point of presenting my view, and I invite others to do the same.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

14. I am a decision maker, but I make a point of listening to others to find the best solution possible.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

15. I like to meet other people halfway.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

16. I try to adjust my priorities to accommodate other people's needs.

Definitely true

True

Tends to be true

Tends not to be true

Not true

Definitely not true

Context associates will assist with the implementation of each session. They will assist in clarifying questions, maintaining a consistent flow of each session and ensuring that each session is timely and orderly. They will pass out, retrieve assessment documentation, and assist in tabulating the results for data analysis. Each context associate will be apprised of each session so that the process will move seamlessly.

Professional associates will assist in the data tabulation and analysis of the assessment documents. They will critique the final data analysis for completeness and ensure that the qualitative and quantitative analysis was done in accordance with research standards for the doctoral degree program at United Theological Seminary (UTS). The professional associates will also review the overall final project document to ensure they meet the standards of the UTS style manual.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

In this chapter, the field experience affiliated with this project was piloted at Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal. Payne Chapel is a small congregation and it membership consist of four to five families. Even though, they are limited financial and other resources to provide ministry projects, the congregation still wants to make a difference. Although there is conflict and signs of internal struggles, this church desires to be a vital ministry and a healthy church.

The statistical results for this Doctor of Ministry project titled "Pastor and People Jointly Together: A Congregational Model To Reduce Church Conflict While Creating Vitality and Health" is presented in this section. Three (3) pedagogical approaches included sermons, Bible studies, and a workshop presentation. The findings generated from the conflict management training are indicated as follows.

1. What do we fight about?
   50% everything; 35% money, power, position; 12% church business; 3% did not respond

2. Who knows about conflict?
   97% everyone in the church; 3% God

3. How do we feel about conflict?
   60% overwhelmed; 20% compassionate; 20% shocked

4. What were the positive outcomes of conflict?
   10% I'm wiser; 5% purifying process; 15% better defined vision; 35% better communication with congregation; 20% stronger relationships; 15% growth in attendance

5. What were the negative results of conflict?
   15% damaged relationships; 25% leaders left church; 50% loss of trust; 10% bitterness

6. When conflicts arise, I usually stand on my principles.
   75% true; 25% tends to be true

7. When conflict arises, I am usually willing to adjust my priorities to reach a resolution.
   10% definitely true; 10% true; 80% definitely true

8. When a conflict occurs, I tend to back out of the situation and do something else.
   5% true; 30% tends to be true; 55% tends not to be true; 5% not true; 5% definitely not true

9. I don't like to rock the boat. So I cooperate with others and accept instructions easily.
   50% tends to be true; 35% definitely not true; 15% not true

10. During conflict, I immediately work to get everyone's concerns out in the open.
    90% tends to true; 3% not true; 7% definitely not true

11. I think it is more important to get along than to win an argument.
    10% definitely true; 75% true, 15% tends to be true

12. Once I taken a position, I don't like to have others try to talk me out of it.
    10% true; 90% tends to be true

13. When there is conflict, I make a point of presenting my view, and I invite others to do the same.

    50% true; 50% tends to be true

14. I am a decision maker, but I make a point of listening to others to find the best solution possible.

    35% definitely true; 35% true; 30% tends to be true

15. I like to meet other people halfway.

    35% definitely true; 25% true; 40% tends to be true

16. I try to adjust my priorities to accommodate other people's needs.

    85% definitely true; 10% true; 4% tends to true; 1% tends not to be true

Sermons Survey Results

Jeremiah 30: 15-19 Healing and Restoration for the Wounded and Broken

1. What is God's response to conflict according to the text?

   90% healing and restoration; God is disappointed with people 7%; 3% learning to compromise

2. What is the responsibility of God's messenger when conflict comes?

   90% God's love and willingness to restore; 10% many are guilty

3. Who Does God hold accountable for conflict among his chose people?

   100% the people

4. What is the basis of conflict in the text?

   95% Sin; 5% no answer

Isaiah 6:1-8 Here Am I, Send Me

1. What is God's response to conflict according to the text?

   95% sending Isaiah; 5% God is not please

2. What is the responsibility of God's messenger when conflict comes?

   55% to bring peace and love; 45% to spread God's word

3. Who Does God hold accountable for conflict among his chose people?

   97% God holds us accountable; 3% anyone who does not include God in the process

4. What is the basis of conflict in the text?

   95% people with unclean lips; 5% be kind to each other and come together in peace

1 Corinthians 1:10-25 An Appeal from The Lord

1. What is God's response to conflict according to the text?

   50% church not on one accord; 50% to show the people the problem

2. What is the responsibility of God's messenger when conflict comes?

   99% to come together in a peaceful Christian manner to find a solution; 1% pray

3. Who Does God hold accountable for conflict among his chose people?

   100% ones causing conflict and not doing God's will

4. What is the basis of conflict in the text?

   100% people wanting to take over/not working together

Philippians 4:1-10 Rejoicing in Times of Trouble

1. What is God's response to conflict according to the text?

   50% peace is needed; 50% respecting and forgiving each other

2. What is the responsibility of God's messenger when conflict comes?

   90% talk through; 5% behave in a Christ-like manner; 5% spread the gospel

3. Who Does God hold accountable for conflict among his chose people?

   100% each of us is accountable

   What is the basis of conflict in the text?

   65% not communicating and differences of opinion; 25% no answer; 10% two sister in conflict

Bible Study Survey Results

Matthew 18:15-35

1. What are the circumstances that led to the directives of the Lord in the text?

   100% unforgiveness

2. What is the reason for having the issues (conflict) fully disclosed in the text?

   100% to determine how often you must forgive a person

3. What is the meaning of the text for its time? For today?

   75% the process of learning to forgive; 25% learning to squash conflict

4. Where in the life of the church has this situation revealed itself?

   100% some people do not know how to forgive

James 4:6-12

1. What are the circumstances that led to the directives of the Lord in the text?

   50% disagreeing on different matters-conflict; 50% reconcile conflict with in the church

2. What is the reason for having the issues (conflict) fully disclosed in the text?

   50% to be reconciled, humbled and forgiving; 50% look at the bigger picture to see how smaller issues compound the larger ones

3. What is the meaning of the text for its time? For today?

   100% repent and forgive and be humbled

4. Where in the life of the church has this situation revealed itself?

   100% church organization, leadership positions, and the members in general

James 1:19-27

1. What are the circumstances that led to the directives of the Lord in the text?

   50% deception; 50% double-minded people

2. What is the reason for having the issues (conflict) fully disclosed in the text?

   50% two faced; 50% do not straddle the fence

3. What is the meaning of the text for its time? For today?
   35% be about the Lord's business; 65% we need to be truthful
4. Where in the life of the church has this situation revealed itself?
   100% in all aspects of the church

Romans 12:14-21

1. What are the circumstances that led to the directives of the Lord in the text?
   100% people doing evil for evil
2. What is the reason for having the issues (conflict) fully disclosed in the text?
   50% it is a cycle, which will repeat itself; 50% do not show evil or do evil
3. What is the meaning of the text for its time? For today?
   50% a message for the leadership; 50% be doers and not just hearers of the word
4. Where in the life of the church has this situation revealed itself?
   50% officers and trustees; 50% members deceiving themselves

The conflict management/resolution training took place over a four (4) week period across three (3) pedagogical approaches, which include sermons, Bible studies, and a workshop presentation. There were four sermons preached, four Bible Studies taught, and a workshop. The goal was to provide training as a means to help the congregation reduce internal conflict as well as to determine which method of the three appeared to be most effective for teaching management of church conflict.

Therefore, this pilot study regarding conflict management/resolution indicated that conflict management skills are necessary within the church because they help to improve outcomes, in particular, group and learning objectives within the church. The overall effectiveness of the church's service to others is enhanced when there is cohesiveness and unity among the congregants and congregants and the pastor.

Consequently, conflict management is a positive tool to employ it reduces negativity and generates positivity and a desire to work together. The effect of conflict management in this pilot study demonstrates that it promotes the positive products related to the goals and objectives of enhancing unity in the church. Conflict management helps the congregation to find middle ground and mutual respect for each other.

Consequently, described below are the focal areas of each modality of training. The pedagogy to be discussed first focuses on the sermons concerning management of conflict.

1. Jeremiah 30:15-19 Subject: Healing and Restoration for the Wounded and Broken
2. Isaiah 6:1-8 Subject: Here am I, Send Me (Let Resolution Start With Me)
3. 1st Corinthians 1:10-25 Subject: An Appeal from The Lord (Is God in This)
4. Philippians 4: 1-10 Subject: Rejoicing in Times of Trouble (Joy in the Midst of Conflict-Getting Through)

There were two noteworthy results of those who completed the questionnaires. The majority was able to identify the conflict within the message and those responsible for the confusion and negativity across the four messages preached. However, there was mixed responses as to the solutions needed to resolve the conflict. There was one common theme and that is conflict has existed for a long time and that it should be resolved in order for the church to move forward.

On the other hand, one of the drawbacks of teaching through sermon as expressed by some congregants was that there was not opportunity to engage in dialogue about a matter as crucial as managing the conflict we have been dealing with for years. However, people were able to gain some skills on conflict management and resolution from the

message. In terms of the Bible studies, the focuses for conflict management/resolution are as noted:

1. Matthew 18:15-35 Subject: Forgiveness
2. James 4:6-12 Subject: Humility, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness
3. James 1:19-27 Subject: Deception and Double Mindedness
4. Romans 12:14-21: Reject Evil

Consequently, the Bible study results yielded the following. Participants in the Bible study demonstrated through dialogue and responses on the questionnaire that forgiveness and reconciliation was an enormous factor when managing conflict. Conflicts are created when people see things differently, that is, there are opinions that are at the opposite end of the continuum, people process information varying ways, and bring the sum total of who they are into the conflict. As indicated by the results, when people have closed minds and hearts also a general desire not to forgive or reconcile, conflict arises and can lingers on for years.

Forgiveness allows people the opportunity to make allowances and modify attitudes toward one another. Conflicts waste time and energy and deflect people from the task at hand. The participants of Bible study felt that all the bickering and infighting made it hard to keep focused on the work to be done and that was saving souls and serving the people. Many felt that the lack of forgiveness started with the leadership of the church and trickled down to the church body at large. Conflicts also lead to unnecessary tensions and disagreements among the individuals. The congregants indicated that people have to be open and honest and learn to be vulnerable to resolve

conflict. The congregation needs to become more transparent in its interactions with one another in order to heal and become as one.

The final modality to be discussed is the workshop. The workshop had multiple foci as indicated below:

1. What is conflict
2. How to identify conflict
3. Types of Conflict
4. Constructive Conflict
5. Destructive or Negative Conflict
6. Resolving Conflict
7. Love brings about a healthy congregation
8. Fighting should end with forgiveness

The first pedagogical approach utilized was the workshop because it served as a means of introducing and teaching about conflict and management of church conflict. This workshop helped to undergird how to identify conflict when it exists and how to resolve it. This basic training on conflict was the precursor for the other two approaches used in this pilot study.

Moreover, the workshop's pedagogical approach seemed to be most effective with the participants. The feedback generated gave indication that the people enjoyed and learned the most on conflict resolution from this presentation. Comments recorded following the training included these statements:

1. The training we had on today is something we can use in the church and the workplace.

2. I can tell you are trying to make a difference in our church by speaking directly to the current situation about the conflict.
3. I am praying and hoping that things will get better in our church.
4. We have conflict in our church for years and it's about time the conflict stop.
5. I believe that God is speaking directly to you because you know exactly what going on.
6. The training was great, we should have more workshop the training was very encouraging.

Regarding overall results, the participants reported that the workshop presentation was most effective in helping them to gain an understanding of conflict and its resolutions. Some of the key factors the workshop helped to demonstrate as stated on surveys show that the training help those to see the need to build relationship to avoid and resolve conflicts, to have better communication with the congregation in general, adjust individual priorities to reach resolution, to be transparent, and to actively participate in the decision making process in order to resolve conflict positively.

Even though there were three approaches to be utilized to teaching about conflict and it management and resolution, the workshop modality appeared to be the most effective as shown through survey, dialogue during the workshop, and post-workshop statement from the participants. In general, it seems that providing training within congregations concerning conflict resolutions is of paramount importance.

Implications For The Future

Conflict Management is not often discussed in the context of the church, usually the approach to conflicts is to put out fires as they arise. However, in order for the church to survive, it is important to begin to address conflict head on prior to is arousal. This

pilot study has shown how effectively training the congregation in the art of conflict management can be to the life of the church and love and unity within. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this study be replicated with a larger group of people. The study should focus on using the workshop pedagogical approach for training. The result of this study should be compared to the replica in order to maintain the integrity of the study. The replication should be expanded to incorporate the material from the Bible studies and sermons to broaden the training and dialogue among participants.

Conclusion

This pilot study, although used in the context of the small church, materials used and results show that it has positively impacted those who participated. The study further indicates that it is worthy of replication in other churches. Conflict management and resolution are salient topics of discussion in the wider church setting. Training on conflict management should become a part of standard Christian education training to maintain unity in the church of God, in general.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This project originated because of the growing pains of conflict throughout a pastor's ministry—a pastor who wanted the spiritual best for her congregation as a whole, and as individual members. The zeal and passion for ministry I once had and was once excited about was eroding into burnout. This burnout was due because of the conflicts and disputes between the pastor and the people; while, at the same time, dealing with the brokenness of some of the members who were discouraged due to the conflict. There were some affected by the conflict that experienced hurt and pain. However, one day I believed that a change would come and that we would fit jointly together to reduce the conflict through much prayer. Through the process of growing pains, the project began to be fulfilling and rewarding in the life of the church.

The context for this project and ministry was Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in the beautiful city of Brunswick, Georgia. This charming city is located in Glynn County along the southeastern Coast of Georgia, surrounded by islands, and is known as a port city. The culture of the city often reminds me of my hometown of New Orleans which has Victorian style homes, surrounded by water and is a port city as well. The church was established in 1895 and is a small congregation with less than one hundred members. This is known as a family church where most people are related and come to church almost every Sunday. As I reflect on my family church, it appears as if

most people came to church on Sundays out of tradition. There are many reflections of tears and pain in ministry, and wanting to throw in the towel, but the reality is that I could no more throw in the towel than stop breathing. Reflecting on the goodness of God as learned growing up in a Christian home; God is faithful and has allowed me to stand the test of time and to hold on to God's unchanging hand.

Payne Chapel has wonderful members, and I am delighted that our paths have crossed along this spiritual walk in life. Payne Chapel sees itself building stronger relationships with each other through church fellowship, discipleship, prayer and worship. Therefore, this church will be a vital and healthy church as we grow together in unity if the path to conflict resolution and management continues.

This project was an attempt to create a model of ministry to develop stronger relationships in the church between pastor and the congregation and also with individual members within the life of a congregation. Through this process, a transformative learning experience exists for both the pastor and the congregation. It is my sincere desire and prayer that conflict, although unavoidable, will find itself useful in the development of spirituality. This project has made me more humble and compassionate toward working together with officers as well as members. This project has also made some of the members more aware of the conflict in their personal life and place of employment. Some of the members believe that conflict resolutions should be offered on their job as well as in congregations. Conflict resolution is definitely a step to strengthen relationships in the church as well as ones personal life.

Initially, during a season when I was burned out, I thought about a workshop on clergy care, and pastoral care for ministers. I also thought about the Holmes and Rahe

stress test for ministers since several clergy persons are burned out due to clergy killers in the church. Later I considered a Health Survey, however, I decided that a workshop on conflict management and resolution would be more advantageous since there is so much conflict and disputes over petty things that God is not pleased. Instead, my method and ministry model consisted of a workshop on conflict management and resolution, a four series Bible Study, and a four series sermon dealing with conflict and how God wants God's people to repent, forgive, reconcile, and heal in God's church.

I am very appreciative for the congregation's participation and sharing. Their feedback contributed greatly to the completion of this project and allowing it to be taken to the next phase. The Bible states, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."[1] Since this project began, the people and me are working better together; we are not a perfect, but we are striving to reduce conflict in God's church. We are intentional about working together as leaders, as Christ would want us to come together in unity and love. Therefore, I believe that this model can be used in other congregations to make a difference and reduce conflict to strengthen their church.

Addressing the results from the data analysis of this project was time consuming, especially waiting until the end of the process to tabulate the surveys. After realizing that I received great response from the members who participated over the four-week period, I saw that more data had been accumulated than what was expected. Both the workshop on conflict resolution and the four part sermon series were well attended, however the Bible Study series was not as well attended as expected. Overall, the workshop received more verbal participation and dialogue than anticipated. Members were excited and mentioned

[1]Rom 8:28 (NRSV).

that they had not had a workshop in a while. Some even stated that the presenter was excellent and held their attention the entire time. One member stated that the spirit was high and they had a good group of members in fellowship at the workshop. Several of the members went out to lunch and bonded, and enjoyed a good meal at a Thai restaurant.

The Preaching series went well; however, a few members asked if they could return their survey sheets the next Sunday. This was problematic because a member may not remember what was preached and did not answer the questions fairly. There were some members who did not complete the survey at all, thinking that it was helping me. I felt as if it was a three-fold result—assisting the church, the members, as well as me.

Payne Chapel is a traditional AME Church, and when I implemented the Bible study during their Sunday school period, some of the members disagreed and felt it interfere with Sunday school (another potential conflict needing to be solved). Another member mentioned we have new Sunday school books we just purchased and we need to start using them. Another member was concerned with the time it would take to finish this project. The superintendent of the Sunday school said, "Pastor we will give you one more Sunday on this project." Later, the superintendent's wife mentioned to the pastor that she needed to publicly thank the superintendent for allowing the pastor to use their Sunday school time. I agreed and said that I was trying to smooth things out and not cause any undo conflict; therefore once I acknowledged the superintendent and thanked the Sunday school class everything appeared to be just fine.

This overall process was a rewarding and learning experience where In felt the mission was accomplished for both the people and me as we worked together to reduce conflict. Hopefully and prayerfully this project on reducing conflict by promoting

training on conflict management and conflict resolution can be used across the African Methodist Episcopal Church as well as other denominations across the country.

Recommendations for this project are to stay prayed up, be encouraged, and remain focused. The process of this project was not easy; however, I would recommend recruiting persons with great organizational skills and more context associates for assistance during this process. Several meetings with both the congregation and the context associates would help to stress the importance of their participation.

Upon further reflection, there needs to be more time to make the process work. Initially, four weeks seemed sufficient, but now it would appear that extending the time, and including the congregation leaders in the planning so that conflict does not occur unnecessarily could gain more. Perhaps involving another congregation in the workshop and Bible study could prove more beneficial, allowing other voices who do not have as much a stake in the process.

Without any doubt, the church should be a place where God is not the author of confusion, but of faith, hope, and love. The church should be against strife and conflict that promotes anything but a life where Christ is the center. Believers need to be those who are walking by faith having come this far by faith. As the Bible states, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."[2] I have stood totally on faith through this project and have grown spiritually and worked to gain humility. This was not an easy project but trusting and believing in God to see me to the end was a constant prayer. In conclusion, let it be said that the process, though slightly flawed, works. It can be improved to the point that the questions raised in this project can find answers.

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[2]Heb 11: 1 (NRSV).

God is awesome and faithful. Again, with special thanks to Payne Chapel for it is a privilege for me to be their pastor to lead and guide them. All in all, I asked for spiritual direction from God. Remember, my beloved, walk in love and to be peacemakers in the Body of Christ.

APPENDIX C

BIBLE STUDY A

Payne Chapel

Matthew 18:15-35

Forgiveness comes from the heart

1. What is the definition of sin?

2. What is the definition of forgiveness?
   a. Why should we forgive if someone hurt you or sin against you?

   b. Do believe that there are people in the church or someone you had conflict with and will not apologize if they have offended you or show fault against you and it between the two?

   c. If so, please share an example without saying the person name.

   d. How did you handle this situation?

3. Why is it so hard or difficult for mature Christian to forgive one each other?

   a. Should an individual worry if the person offer forgiveness and the other won't accept their apology?

   b. One reason why, people should not worry or take any against someone because in Matthew 18: 18

   c. Each person is responsible for their own sin and wrong doing.

4. Do you believe it best to reconcile and forgive in order to have peace?

5. How many times does the Bible states we should forgive?

6. How many of you can recall the "The Lord's Prayer" that Jesus taught his Disciples, the word forgive is in that prayer.

   a. How many of you are willing to say the Lord's Prayer?

   b. How many of you are willing to forgive and forget?

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE SERMON B

November 30, 2014

Philippians 4:1-10

Subject: Rejoicing In Times Of Trouble

Behavior Method: Move the people to be content

In the text on today, the author Paul clearly speaks to the church of Philippi and confronts them about the argumentation and conflict in the church, especially between two women, Euodia and Syntyche. So Paul says the Church needs to come into agreement with God. Unfortunately, there is a lack of unity and lack of joy in the church of Philippi, as it is in some churches today and even as we experience in our own church today. The conflict was among other members as well in the church, but Paul addressed and gave special instructions to these two leaders, some scholars say they were deaconesses. Paul clearly speaks to the women of the church, not his wife, because he was not married.

We don't know why the women were arguing, perhaps it was because one baked a better pie than the other, or because one wanted red carpeting instead of blue; maybe it was because one sang the solo, or the pastor called one's name one more time than the other—whatever the argument, they had a good one going and Paul needed to address it before it got worse and there was division—which often happens when conflict cannot be handled.

I. Background (Paul appeals to the church of Corinth quarrelling among each other)

A. Conflict/Quarreling in the house of God

a. Verbal abuse (words hurt)

b. Can lead to physical abuse (physically hitting and putting scars on the body)

c. Can lead to emotional abuse (wounded scars internally from verbal abuse)

d. Can lead to psychological abuse (mentally ruin from verbal abuse)

II. Rejoice in the Lord

A. In every situation have the Joy of the Lord—You cannot change others, only yourself:

a. Be more patient

b. Be more kind

c. Be more tolerant

d. Be more loving

e. Be more caring

f. Be more gentle

g. Be more like Christ

h. Make your prayer request unto God

B. Don't be anxious for nothing

A. Worry

We often worry about things in our life that we have no control over situations or problems. When this happens we should call on the God that will hear our prayers. Worry can sometimes cause us to be stressed out or anxious.

B. Stressed Out

C. Anxious

III. Christians learn by doing

A. Be content comes with practice

1. Whether you are rich or poor be content
2. Whether you are happy or sad be content
3. Whether you sick or ill be content
4. Whether you have a job to go to or not be content
5. Whether you have food on the table or not be content
6. In the secret of your contentment you will find…

a. Peace

b. Joy

c. Happiness

d. Love

IV. Celebration: Rejoice in the good days and bad days, rejoice in the time of suffering, trouble won't last always. I have learned to be content. The Bible says rejoice always, we serve a good God. The God of peace, The God of Love, The God of Hope, The God of kindness, The God of Unity and The God of Togetherness can solve every conflict and every problem. If we can remember to rejoice always we can sing with the angels in heaven:

Rejoice ye pure in heart! Rejoice,

Give thanks, and sing;

Your festal banner wave on high,
The cross of Christ your King.
Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, Give thanks and sing.

Yes, on through life's long path,
Still chanting as ye go;
From youth to age, by night and day,
In gladness and in woe.
Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, Give thanks and sing.
LET THE CHURCH SAY AMEN!

APPENDIX C

BIBLE STUDY A

Payne Chapel

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6. How many of you can recall the "The Lord's Prayer" that Jesus taught his Disciples, the word forgive is in that prayer.

   a. How many of you are willing to say the Lord's Prayer?

   b. How many of you are willing to forgive and forget?

APPENDIX D

BIBLE STUDY B

Your Conflict or Disagreements can Determine Your Fall
Bible Study
Payne Chapel
Romans 12: 14-21

1. What does Paul mean when he states, "bless those persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

    a. Are you a mature Christian and can bless those who just attacked you?
    b. How do you know that you can walk away from conflict and bless someone? Has anyone tested you?
    Share one of your experiences where you have been tested by your enemies who have started conflict with you and what did you do?

2. Have you ever rejoiced with those who rejoice and weeped with those who weep?

    a. If so, when and why?
    b. Did you have happiness for does who rejoice and compassion for those who weep?
    c. Should Christian forgive and forget or laugh when others weep?

3. Should everyone in the house of God live in harmony?
    a. Do you think it is noble and wise that everyone get along?
    b. Should Christians have the same love for one another or have the same mind as Christ?

4. What does Paul means when he say "vengeance is mine, I will repay, say the Lord?"
    a. Why do Christians have conflicts or disputes in God's house?
    b. Should Christians take matters into their own hand and seek revenge?

5. Would you feed you enemy if your enemy was hungry and thirsty?
    a. Yes or No
    b. If yes, why?
    c. If no, why not?
    d. Is there room for forgiveness or repentance?

6. How shall Christians overcome evil for good when you enemy attack you in the church?

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